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THE

MISTAKE OF A LIFE-TIME:

OR, THE

ROBBER OF THE RHINE VALLEY.

A STORY OF

The Mysteries of the Shore,

AND

THE VICISSITUDES OF THE SEA.

BY WALDO HOWARD, ESQ.

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PREFACE.

For us, and for our tragedy,
Here stooping to your clemency,
We beg your hearing patiently. HAMLET.

The author of the following story sits down to amuse both himself and his readers by weaving together such scenes and pictures as will form a truthful panorama of the events of a stirring and romantic period. Life will be depicted as his fancy hath reflected it, and the scene drawn and colored after nature herself. It will be his effort to engage the reader's curiosity and interest, and also to charm and delight him by those exhibitions of true feelings which his own heart has not unfrequently realized in itself.

The two extremes of life created by poverty and riches will be depicted, and the extremes of virtue and vileness passed in review before the mind's eye. Loveliness and hideousness will be contrasted, that the former may be more rightly appreciated and the latter more abhorred. The promptings of pride and jealousy, and the teeming wiles of the heart will be recorded, and our story so set down as to interest without outraging sensibility or borrowing from the impossible.

Thus much it seems proper for the author to say, by way of hands-shaking, and now with your kind consideration, to the story itself. THE AUTHOR.

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THE MISTAKE OF A LIFE-TIME.

CHAPTER I.

THE TAP ROOM OF ST. GILES.

Now let it work: mischief, thou art afoot,
Take then what course thou wilt. SHAKSPEARE.

THE street lamps were burning dimly in St. Giles, London, and the thick haze of night brooded over the eastern portion of the great metropolis with more than its wonted density. The vast, overgrown city was slumbering, or rather the more respectable portion of it were wrapped in the still mantle of sleep, while the noise and riotous dissipation that seemed indigenous to this section of the town, came bursting forth in rude boisterousness and undefined sounds from the broken windows of the tottering tenements, and now from some damp cellar's mouth, half under ground. The night police frequently passed in their rounds either end of the dark narrow streets, but they seemed to give no heed to the turmoil and rioting, so long as it was confined within doors, and did not burst forth into the open light in the streets. They had become calloused to these bachannalian scenes and vulgar habits, by intimacy with the people who inhabit these sections of the town, and did not care to interfere with them unless their duty and instructions compelled them to do so.

It is here that we must introduce the reader in the opening of our story.

The clock had already struck ten, one summer's night, when a couple of figures turned the corner from a large thoroughfare on George's-in-the-field, and quietly made their way down one of the narrow and dirty lanes referred to. They moved like persons who were fully aware of the vile character of the neighborhood, and who were on their guard to prevent being surprised, while the stealthiness with which they evidently picked their way through the riotous district, seemed to indicate some delicate and peculiar object in view. There was quite a difference in the size of the two persons. The larger was dressed in a coarse top coat and cloth cap, with rough top boots, his figure presenting tokens of remarkable physical strength, from the great breadth of shoulders and chest, and other signs that might have been seen even in that dim uncertain light. As he moved on, his gait discovered that he was lame, which rendered his walk somewhat awkward, though his step was quick and unyielding, notwithstanding this blemish.

His companion must have been some years his junior, for his figure and bearing evinced the uncompleted frame of youth, though his form was stout and well filled, and he walked like one who had the resolution and the strength to hold his ground in any emergency. As they passed now and then beneath the street lamps that were lit along the road at intervals, his face appeared much darker than the

other's, having a deep olive cast, such as imbues the skin in the tropics and the Indies. Like his elder companion he was dressed in a coarse overcoat, cap and top boots. Neither of them seemed to carry any weapons, though they were in such a dangerous section, yet they might have had arms concealed beneath their ample coats.

They paused now for a moment, before one of the noisy houses that lined the street, and listened in silence to the sounds of revelry within.

"This is the house, I have marked it well," said the elder of the two.

"It is a dram shop," said the other, peering in at a crack.

"Yes, and of the vilest kind; a sort of rendezvous for burglars and thieves," said the eldest, taking his stand where he could gain a view of the interior.

"Half of them are drunk," continued the younger, still looking in at a crack of the crazy old building occupied for a tap room, so many of which abound in this locality.

"Do you see the woman who keeps the shop, just behind that bar?"

"Yes, fat as a porpoise," replied the other. "Do you know her name?"

"They call her Mother Giles," replied the elder of the two.

"Is this where you are going in?" asked the younger.

"Yes," said his companion. "We will enter quietly as possible and call for something to drink, and after that I will take the first opportunity to draw the old woman into conversation. If I can accomplish my object by gentle means and without force, why all the better, but if we must, why *we must*, at all hazards," he continued, with a meaning look at the other.

"Hark! what is that?"

"Only a drinking song."

"With a chorus of broken china I should think. There it goes again."

"Are you ready?"

"Yes, lead on," said his companion, as they approached the low entrance.

"Have your eyes about you and your arms ready, for these are desperate people."

"I'm prepared."

With these words of caution the two entered the tap room

The drinking room referred to within the dilapidated building, was on the first floor, and was one of those filthy gin shops that abound in the metropolis. There were six or eight cut-throat looking objects seated here and there in the room, and three of them were smoking together at a rough old table opposite the door whence the two persons referred to had entered. These three were evidently concocting some villanous rascality, as they talked in a hurried undertone, and often with much vehemency. The others seemed to be of less importance, and evinced the several stages of drunkenness, from the high excitement of the stimulus, to the silliness of real inebriation, singing, laughing and dozing by turns, quite forgetful of the miseries that each seemed heir to.

Across one end of the apartment was erected a rough counter, greasy with filth; behind which were displayed a few bottles, decanters and tumblers, the latter articles reversed, with here and there a lemon upon them, and from this place the liquid poison was dealt out, a dram at a time. Sitting behind this rude bar, was a woman half hidden in the cloud of bad tobacco smoke that she was most assiduously puffing from a pipe. She was a person of some fifty odd years of age, large and bloated with stimulus, while her face showed many a rough and ugly scar. One might easily read the reckless character that actuated her, in a single glance of her small gray eyes. Though she sat there, to all outward appearance in perfect quiet, and intent solely upon the occupation of smoking, and watching the ascending wreaths, yet a keen observer would have noticed that her small twinkling eyes were all around the room, watching for a chance to further her interests by selling a dram, or else to set some villany afloat upon her customers.

It was into such a scene as this that the two persons whom we have described now entered, and as they did so, there was no little stir evinced by the inmates of the room. The drunken ones paused in their revelry to ogle them, the three conspirators looked at them with an eye to business, and the old woman, knocking the ashes out of her pipe and looking about her small quarters, called through a side door for some one to come and wipe down a table for the gentlemen.

"Whew! what an odious smell of onions," said the younger of the two.

"Keep your olfactories as well as your lips closed for the present," whispered the other.

"Sit down, gentlemen, sit down," said the woman, blandly.

"Here at this table nearest the door," whispered the elder of the two.

The woman's summons brought into the room a young girl of some thirteen or fourteen years of age, but of most singular and striking beauty. Perhaps it was the contrast that the child afforded to the surrounding company and the place itself, that startled the younger of the two new comers, who gazed upon the girl with undisguised admiration. She was very coarsely dressed, but her sweet face would have shown its wealth of beauty through the most squalid covering of rags, while her form, though yet so young and unmatured, was delicate and lovely in the extreme. Her half plaintive, half dejected expression, though it was evidence but too plain of her unhappy lot, yet added interest to the childlike beauty and innocence of her face.

"A pure transparent, pale, and radiant face,
Like to a lighted alabaster vase."

The elder of the new comers, though he regarded the girl with no tokens of surprise, yet evinced no less interest and attention than his younger companion, and spoke to her most kindly as she wiped the rough table before them, and in a gentle voice solicited their orders.

"That is the child of whom I spoke," said the elder of the two to the other, after he had given his order for a bottle of the best wine the house afforded.

"You only said she was interesting, but this child is absolutely beautiful," said his companion, fixing his eyes once more upon the girl, as she entered with the wine.

"Do you think so?"

"Yes, who would not?"

"What is your name, my good girl?" asked the elder of the two.

"Edith, sir," she answered, seemingly surprised at the tones of kindness.

"Come hither."

The child drew near to the table with a submissive air.

"Have you been long in this place?" continued her interrogator.

"O, yes," said the child, with a sad and listless air.

"How would you like to live with me in a nice house and be sent to school?"

The child gazed for a moment at both the new comers, as if she were saying in her own mind, does he ask such a strange question as that in earnest? He who had asked her marked the expression of her face and studied it well. In a moment more she asked:

"To school?"

"Yes, and be taught to read and write like a lady, Edith."

"O, I should like above all things to go to school," exclaimed the artless girl, as a beam of joy lighted up her pale face for a moment.

"Perhaps we can get her permission to let you go," said the eldest of the two, nodding towards the woman at the bar, "and then I will take you from here."

The child shook her head incredulously, and faintly smiled.

"Would you not like to go with me?" asked the gentleman.

"I would like to go away from here anywhere," she said, sighing.

"Never fear—you shall do so, my good girl," said her interrogator.

"Ah! but she will not consent, I know," replied the child, looking towards the woman.

"Do you think she would refuse if I offered her a handsome sum in gold?"

"Hush!" said the child, timidly, "if you have any gold do not mention it here!"

"Don't worry for me, my good girl. I will try presently and see what bargain I can make with the woman. Don't go far away, but be where you can follow us if I bid you."

The child looked thankful, but shook her head, as much as to say that any effort to accomplish the object referred to would be useless, and at the same moment they were interrupted by a shrill call from the woman, who upbraided the girl in no moderate terms for her laziness as she termed it, and with a rude volley of oaths sent her into the back room again, to engage in some menial service.

After sipping his wine, or rather pretending to do so for a few moments, the eldest of the two gentlemen—for their bearing seemed to entitle them to this appellation, though the

coarseness of their dress was no evidence of their belonging to the better class—stepping up to the bar, commenced a familiar and apparently pleasant talk with the woman of the house, evidently relating to the young girl already referred to. The woman seemed much interested, but did not appear to concede the point, which the customer urged with much earnestness.

In the mean time the party at the opposite table were eyeing first the person who was talking at the bar, and then his companion who was still seated before the wine. Neither of them were persons whom even a desperado would wish to attack unprepared, yet they seemed to be deciding in their minds whether the present was the best moment for such a purpose, or whether they should wait still longer. Their manner and conduct showed them to be burglars, highwaymen, or both, and they were soon whispering together in a way that showed conclusively that they had already formed some plan or design upon the new comers. He who stood at the bar did not turn his back towards them even for a moment, but while he addressed the woman, though he seemed desirous that he should not be overheard, yet was careful at the same time to face the suspicious looking party.

"I am not deaf, you need not speak so loud," said the gentleman, a little ruffled.

"But I tell you I will not let the girl go," repeated the woman, in reply to some remark of her customer. "I have good reason for it, and she will bring me twice the sum you offer, within a couple of years from now, and besides I get her labor into the bargain until then."

"Very well, double the amount, then," said the gentleman—"call it a hundred pounds, and I'll pay you that and take her away to-night."

"It wont do, it wont do, a hundred pounds is not enough," said the woman, at the same time stealing an intelligent glance and nodding to the three opposite.

The mention of the hundred pounds was not lost upon the burglars, and the woman as we have seen took occasion to repeat the sum after him, so they might understand that doubtless the man had that amount of money about his person at that very time. The truth was, she would without doubt have parted with the girl at the price named and even for a much smaller sum, had she not expected to get the money or a part of it from the man, without giving any equivalent at all, before he left the house. She was of course in league with the villains opposite, and was confident in her own mind of sharing in the expected spoils. Thus influenced, the old woman still demurred, and indeed seemed disinclined to part with the girl at all, or at any price.

In the mean time Edith was passing in and out of the room constantly waiting upon the new comers, for three others had now joined the party of burglars, and were listening to some hurried and whispered remarks in relation to the two gentlemen. At last he who was talking to the woman seemed to give up his object in despair, and returning to his young companion at the table, he conversed with him in a low tone for some minutes. They were resolving in what way it would be best for them to proceed in order to gain their object, when they were interrupted by the approach of a stout six foot individual, much taller and larger than the rest of his party, and evidently their bully. This fellow abruptly approached their seats, and declared in a blunt, insulting tone that he must have some of their wine. The youngest of the two gentlemen was on his feet in an instant, and prepared for an assault, but at a significant look from his companion, he stepped back quietly to his seat again, though his flushed cheek showed that it cost him an effort not to resist the insult at once.

"I say that I will have a glass of your wine," reiterated the bully.

"You had better return to your friends peaceably," said the eldest of the gentlemen. "I seek no quarrel with you, but you cannot taste that wine."

"Cannot?"

"That was my word, sir."

"We will see about that," said the bully, blustering towards the table.

He was really a very powerful man physically, but the development of his figure, though evincing great strength, was rather bungling, showing large limbs and a bloated figure, with a preponderance of abdomen, while he who thus opposed them all presented exactly the opposite style of power. Small at the waist, with limbs neatly tapering in their formation,

but with that breadth of chest and development of shoulders that showed how powerful were the muscles and sinews of the man. These tokens had not escaped the practised eyes of the rogues, but then they were three to one, and counted on an easy and bloodless victory, in case of absolute opposition, which they scarcely anticipated, under the existing circumstances, notwithstanding the bold front that was presented to their first advance.

"You are determined to insult us, I see," continued the gentleman, perfectly calm.

"Just as you please," said the bully, "it's all the same to me."

"It will not be if you annoy me any farther," said the gentleman.

"Give me the wine," said the man, stretching forth his hand to take it from the table.

But as the villain extended his arm, the gentleman raised himself to his full height, and with a blow given almost as quick as thought itself upon the head of the intruder, laid him lifeless at his feet! Two of the gang now rushed to their fallen comrade's assistance, but neither of them could strike a blow, both lay prostrate upon the floor beside the other, apparently dead, with the blood streaming from out their skulls. The gentleman recovered himself instantly, and was no more discomposed than as though he had merely been at play. His cheek was unblanched, his hand was steady, and he breathed deeply and freely, with full self-possession.

A volley of oaths escaped from the party opposite who were maddened into rage, but yet did not advance from the position they held.

"Perhaps there are more of ye that would like to be there," said the gentleman at last, with a bitter and scornful smile upon his lip; "if so, come on!"

After whispering together once more, the three desperadoes that were still left unharmed, seemed about to make a simultaneous attack, but as they turned once more towards the two gentlemen they found them prepared, and met the stern, unyielding eye of the extraordinary man bent keenly upon them as he said again calmly:

"Come on!"

A howl of mingled rage and oaths was the only response they uttered.

The sight of three of their comrades lying insensible if not dead upon the floor, caused the others to hesitate and count the cost. It looked like a miracle to them to see three stout men, renowned fighters, accustomed to mingle daily and nightly in brawls of every character, thus overcome in an instant by a single arm. The insult that the first had offered was not of course for the sake of the wine itself, but as an excuse whereby to start a quarrel with the strangers, and then in the melee to rob them. All this time the woman looked on in profound astonishment, but ventured not a word, while the drunken party, with a sort of natural instinct, withdrew to the farthest corner.

"If the girl comes in again," said the elder gentleman to his companion in an under tone, "seize upon her gently, but be sure to retain her; tell her that we are her friends, and that she must go with us. I will open a way if it be necessary. Loosen your pistols now, though they must not be used except as the very last resort."

"I understand," said his companion, putting his hands into his coat pockets for a moment, where a quick ear might have heard the half cock of a pistol's lock.

"Who are you?" asked one of the gang, now approaching the two, yet taking good care to keep out of reach of the arm that had felled his companions.

"That concerns you not," said the elder of the two; "we are here on our own business, and be assured we shall perform it. Unless you wish to share the fate of those fools upon the floor, you had best keep well out of my way, or you will follow suit."

The man had not the courage to tempt his fate, and so retired to his party.

Thus completely intimidated by the stern and resolute front of the stranger, the party once more retired to a corner of the apartment to consult. Had they dared to use their fire arms, they would have done so at once, but this they rarely ventured upon, for they knew full well that the first discharge and report would bring the police down upon them in force.

In the mean time, startled by the noise she had overheard, caused by the conflict, Edith's curiosity had brought her into the room, when the younger of the gentlemen seized her by the arm and drew her to his side. He told

her that they were her friends, and that if she would go with them they would protect and cherish her. Edith believed him at once, for there was truth written on every line of his frank, open countenance, and so far from attempting to release herself, she only clung more closely to his side, while the old woman fiercely ordered her away to the other room.

"Edith," screamed the woman, in a towering passion.

The child hesitated, but her companion held her firmly.

"Edith, come away, I will flay you alive," continued the hag.

Long custom had rendered the child so obedient to the woman's authority, that she almost struggled with him who now held her, in order to obey the rude summons that was made upon her. But a few quieting and encouraging words from her new friend pacified her, and she remained quiet by his side notwithstanding the almost frenzied rage and threats of the woman behind the bar.

"Now is the time," said the eldest of the two, "get into the street as soon as possible, and hurry away. Don't mind me. I'll bring up the rear, but don't loose your hold of the child—if anything happens to me, take her to the house and take care of her. Remember."

This was said in a hurried whisper between a lull of the noise and confusion; and having secured possession of the child, the two began gradually to make their way towards the door, near which fortunately they had been sitting. But a new phase was now put upon the matter by the woman, who appealed to her friends to know if they were going to look tamely on and see her servant kidnapped before their very eyes, nor lift a hand to prevent it. Thus aroused, the burglars seemed to resolve upon one more assault upon the strangers. But he who had already proved so fatal to their companions, receded slowly backwards, never taking his eye from them. He knew very well the game they would now play.

They had learned by experience, and now his enemies came on more cautiously and all together; it was the only way that promised them success. He saw that it would be fatal to permit them to attack him in this way, and with a wonderful display of strength and agility he sprang among them, felling another to the floor, and with one blow breaking the arm of a fifth person so that it hung useless by his side. The other desperado had been dealt with by the younger of the two, who seemed scarcely less at home than the other. This bold repulse was decisive, and amid the frowns and curses that saluted their ears, the gentlemen and their charge made their way into the street.

The curses and oaths of the woman followed them to the last, to the no small consternation of the girl, who seemed to dread her more than all else.

"Rest on me, Edith," said the younger of the two men, drawing the trembling arm of the child within his own, and half supporting her as they hurried along.

"Thank you, sir," she replied, striving to keep up with her companion, who was hurrying with no little speed from the vile neighborhood.

"We will soon be clear of this place, and you will have nothing to fear," he continued, striving to cheer the child as they went.

"Are they following us?" she asked, startled by a sound behind them.

"No, no."

"But I hear footsteps."

"It's your imagination, Edith."

"I'm sure it's them."

"No, that is our friend," replied her companion, half turning the child that she might see that he who followed was the person who had rescued her.

"Keep to the left," said the person behind, as they turned from the street.

"Here are the police, and we need hurry no more," replied his companion.

"Ay," said the other, "but I do not care to be questioned even by them, so cross over and pass along quietly. I will join you a few squares further up the street."

It was not until the three had turned out of this second street into a large thoroughfare, that the person who had borne the brunt of the contest unwound from his wrist a small Indian netting, into the end of which was woven a leaden shot of three or four pounds weight, so arranged as to be hidden in the palm of the hand. A weapon at that time almost unknown in England, but in very common use in India. The secret of his effective and fatal blows was at once explained—they were performed with the *slung shot.*

CHAPTER II.

THE ADOPTED CHILD.

Here to the houseless child of want,
My door is open still. GOLDSMITH.

HURRYING towards the nearest hackney coach stand, the three individuals who had thus escaped from the melee in the tap room of St. Giles', stepped into a vehicle, and the driver turned his horses' heads towards the west part of the town, and after threading patiently a labyrinth of streets, the vehicle drew up at last before a splendid mansion, in what was then the west end of London, but which has since, by the continued growth of the great city, become very nearly or quite its centre.

Alighting, the party entered one of the princely abodes before them. The servant who opened the door at their summons, stepped back in astonishment for a moment, but on meeting the eye of the eldest of the two gentlemen, he bowed respectfully, and appearing to have recovered from his surprise, at once ushered them into the grand reception room of the house. Both seemed to be at home here; the eldest throwing himself carelessly into a richly covered and cushioned chair, exclaimed with a sigh, that showed how intense his excitement had been through all this strange business, although from the very first he had appeared so calm and collected:

"Thank God, that business is now well over, and all are safe."

'It is *over* indeed with some of those poor miscreants," said the younger of the two, rubbing a slight bruise on his arm. "I could hardly believe that you overcame them so easily, although it was before my very eyes; but you struck like a sledge hammer."

"It is all practice, Walter," said the other, smiling; "when I was a young man, I frequently performed harder feats than this has proved, on a simple bet, and without this neat bit of an Indian weapon either. You know I am considered to be very strong."

"I shall never doubt it after what I have seen to-night."

"Sit down, Edith," said the gentleman kindly, to the girl, who had up to this time remained standing, but who did not seem to hear the words addressed to her.

"She does not hear you," said the other, observing her with interest.

Nor did the poor girl hear him who had addressed her, for she was looking about her with much the same wonder that Aladdin might have felt when he saw the enchanted palace rise at his command from the bosom of the water. Her eyes were gazing from the rich soft carpet beneath her feet, to the gorgeously stuccoed ceiling above her head, at the glittering and brilliant chandelier that was pendant from the ceiling, and at the splendid array of paintings, covering the walls in all directions,

and finally at every article of ornament or use with which the apartment was thronged.

If possible, she looked still more deeply interesting to them now than when they had seen her remarkable beauty amid all the vulgar surroundings of the tap room,

"Adorned with all the simple charm
And unbought grace of nature."

Her coarsely-made dress was so at variance with the proud elegance about her, that the contrast was scarcely less marked than when they had first met her that night and compared her beauty with her situation. Her hands were clasped together now and raised even with her breast, while the expression of her sweet face seemed to say, "Is it possible that there is so much beauty and elegance as this upon the earth?" Poor child! She had probably never been beyond the boundaries of George's-in-the-field, nor perhaps, judging by her present surprise and curiosity, had she ever before stood upon a carpeted floor.

"Wont you sit down, Edith?" asked the eldest of the gentlemen, in a kind tone of voice, after marking her amazement with undisguised interest for more than a minute.

"Did you speak, sir,' she asked, timidly, and as though awaking from a deep reverie, and turning her large blue eyes upon him who addressed her.

"Yes, my good girl, wont you sit down?" he repeated.

"O, thank you, sir, not here," replied the poor child, shrinking quickly back, as though she thought it would be sacrilege for her to touch aught that she saw.

"Nay, my good girl, come hither to me," said the gentleman in the kindest tones, as he drew a seat by his side "this is to be your future home."

"My home!" repeated Edith, looking first at the gentleman and then about her; "Did you say that this is to be my home, sir?"

"Ay, my good Edith, thy home, and I will be thy father."

"My father!" said Edith, with a sigh that heaved her bosom audibly.

"Yes, Edith."

Her eyes sought the floor thoughtfully. She seemed in an instant to forget all the splendor about her, and to be looking deep within her own breast at some passing thought, that had cast its shadow across her soul.—Walter, as the elder gentleman had called his companion, exhibited the while scarcely less surprise and interest as he gazed upon the young girl, than did she herself at the sights that met her eye. Never had he seen a being that looked so lovely to him as did that orphan child; and as she stood thus, with her head half reclining upon her breast, gazing upon the floor, Walter turned to the elder gentleman and said with enthusiasm:

"What an attitude for a painter! Mark you, sir, how beautiful this poor girl is? No wonder that even a casual sight of her in the street, should have resolved you to rescue so bright a jewel from the filthy den where we found her this night."

"You are enthusiastic, Walter," said the other, smiling at his zeal.

"Who would not be enthusiastic with such beauty to prompt him?"

"She is very beautiful," said the elder gentleman, gazing in silence for a moment.

"Edith?"

"Sir," said the child, arousing from her secret thoughts.

"Do you remember," asked the eldest of the two gentlemen, "of meeting me a few days since in the street, near where you lived, and that I spoke to you then about your manner of living, and some other matters? I was not in this dress, to be sure."

"I do remember of a person's speaking to me, but he wore the frock of a butcher."

"It was I. I asked you if you would like to leave the rude people with whom you lived and go to a comfortable home. Do you remember you said you would?"

"Yes, I recollect you now."

"And I told you I should inquire about you, if you were a good girl?"

"Yes, sir, but—"

"But what, Edith? Speak out freely, don't let there be any secrets between us."

"What made you choose me, sir, to bring to your house?" she asked, timidly.

"There was something in your face, Edith, that reminded me," said the gentleman, "of a dearly loved sister, one who died when scarcely older than you are now. She was my constant playmate and dearest friend, and our parting at the time seemed like to break my heart. When I saw you I resolved for her

memory's sake, if you were parentless, as I shrewdly suspected, that I would adopt and cherish you as my own child, that I might have ever near me one who should constantly remind me of her who was taken from me by death years ago."

The child seemed pleased at the explanation which she heard.

"You will be faithful to me I trust; nay, I feel that you will, Edith, and also that you will strive to improve the advantage which I shall supply you. Will you not?"

"Indeed I will try, sir, but I hardly understand what you mean. You are too kind to me," she said, as the tears sprang into her eyes for the first time since they had met that night.

"Nay, my good girl, do not weep," said her patron; "all I ask in return from you, Edith, will be to try to think kindly of me, and to do as I shall advise you for your own good."

"I will obey you, sir, in all things," said the still sobbing girl.

"Commence by drying those tears," said the gentleman, pleasantly.

"Can I stay here?"

"Of course you can. I tell you it shall be your home for the future."

"But those people will take me away from here," said the girl, almost trembling at the thought of returning to the tap room, which seemed to chill her very blood.

"No fear of that, my good girl."

"But they are very cunning, sir, and can do almost anything they wish."

"You need not fear for your safety here, Edith," said her patron; "I will place you as far above their reach as though you were a princess of the royal household. Besides, you saw how easily I managed them to-night, did you not?"

"O, yes, I know you are very brave and strong, but you really will not let me go back to that place again?" she said, imploringly.

"No, my good girl, never. You need have no fear of that."

"Heaven bless you, sir," said the poor child, kneeling by his side.

No emotion was visible in the face of him whom the child addressed. His feelings seemed to be under the most thorough and perfect control, and yet it was not from hard-heartedness, for true feeling was too strongly manifested in his general bearing and disposition, to allow of such a conclusion as that.—He raised the young girl from the floor and kindly parting the soft hair from her forehead, touched a bell at his side for a servant.

Walter was much younger in years and experience, his heart was more impressible, his feelings more impetuous than those of his late companion in the night's adventure; and his eyes were now full to overflowing as he gazed upon the scene before him. Edith looked towards him as he sat thus, and seeming suddenly to recollect herself, started up and walking quickly towards him, said in the most innocent and unaffected manner:

"I ought to thank you too, sir, for bringing me safely away from that *place*. It was very kind of you, sir. You were hit by a blow that was meant for me. I saw you raise your arm to keep it from my body. It must have hurt you—I know it must."

"Not at all, my dear—" he was going to say "child," but Edith was so nearly approached to womanhood in her beauty of face and form, that he hesitated for a moment in his speech, and then said, "O, my dear girl, it was a mere scratch that I received; had the villain harmed you, I would have shot him through the heart."

"Ah! who has raised up for me such good friends?" said the girl, looking from one to the other; "I am very, very grateful."

"Thomas," said the gentleman to the servant who answered his bell.

"Sir."

"Send Mrs. Marlow to me immediately."

"Yes, sir."

The man bowed low and disappeared on his errand, as directed.

In a few moments an elderly female appeared, with a bunch of keys at her waist, and bearing in her general appearance the tokens and characteristics of a housekeeper. She courtseyed respectfully, and requested to know the commands of the elder gentleman, who was evidently the master of the house. At the same time she gazed with undisguised amazement, curiosity and wonder at Edith, who stood there in her coarse dress, and to the housekeeper's eye appearing so very queerly.

"Mrs. Marlow, this young lady is Miss Edith."

The housekeeper looked puzzled, but remained silent.

"This is my adopted child, and is to be treated in every particular with the full attention and respect that such a relationship claims from you and all that are in this house."

"Yes, sir," said the housekeeper, stealing a glance at the child.

"I wish particularly that you should exert yourself to render her as comfortable and happy as is possible to make her under my roof. See that she has fitting clothes at once, and every necessary article that may suggest itself. You understand me, Mrs. Marlow?"

"I believe I do, sir," replied the good natured looking housekeeper.

"And, Mrs. Marlow, first see that she has some proper refreshments."

"I will, sir."

"And order a warm bath into the north chamber; that will be hers."

"Yes, sir."

"In short, Mrs. Marlow, I *entrust* her to you," said her master, with emphasis.

"Edith," he continued, "you will go to Mrs. Marlow for everything you may desire. It will be her chief duty to render you comfortable and happy, and if there be aught, however simple, that is unpleasant to you or that in any way mars your peace of mind, then, Edith, I wish you to come always to me. And now good night, my child, and pleasant dreams to your pillow."

"Good night, sir," said Edith, her young bosom heaving quickly with the host of strange and new emotions that filled it, and then turning to Walter she courtseyed with a natural grace and sweetness of manner, and wishing him also a "good night," disappeared with the housekeeeper.

Impressed by the directions which she had received, Mrs. Marlow rather sought to fulfil them than to importune Edith as it regarded herself. Indeed the housekeeper was too well bred to appear inquisitive, and thus the poor girl escaped the catechising that she might have experienced, had her new acquaintance been less considerate and more of a gossip. Mrs. Marlow was, of course, exercised by no small degree of wonder and curiosity to find a poor destitute girl thus brought into the house, and at once admitted to its highest privileges. But her master, she knew very well, was not a person to have his orders called in question, had she felt inclined to do so, though the fact was, the housekeeper's sympathies were at once enlisted in Edith's behalf. She had a liberal and truly Christian heart, and the sight of poverty or misery in any form would excite her commiseration, but when enforced by such gentle innocence and beauty as in Edith's case, she was devoted to its alleviation.

Edith, as she followed the housekeeper, seemed to feel that she was her friend at once.

If the poor girl had been surprised at the elegance and richness that met her view in the reception room, how much more was she astonished at the luxury of the chamber that she was told was designed for her. The delightful and invigorating sensation of the warm bath, the profuseness of linen, the almost miraculous cleanliness of everything around her, the lofty tented bedstead with its silken curtains, and everything in a style of luxury to correspond. Edith closed her eyes for a moment, and recalled her old bed of straw in the vile home she had left, and then opening them again, would look afresh upon the display of taste and wealth that surrounded her on all sides.

Mrs. Marlow was an exception to most housekeepers, having by some chance been born with a heart. A simple thing, to be sure, and something that persons in her capacity frequently look upon as quite a superfluity, and, therefore, rarely call it into use. She neither delighted in scolding the butler and head cook, nor in rendering the chambermaids as completely miserable as possible, nor was her tongue one of that sort that have eclipsed all modern approaches to perpetual motion. In a word, Mrs. Marlow was a very pattern of what a housekeeper should be—quiet, industrious and inclined to promote her own happiness by rendering all about her pleasant and agreeable.

As to the task that had just been set her by the master of the house, she seemed to be delighted with it, and was never tired of answering the multitude of questions that Edith, in her curiosity, addressed to her; nor of instructing her in the use of everything she beheld. Appreciating this kindness, Edith felt quite at home, and when she had got

fairly ready to retire, she threw her arms about the housekeeper's neck and kissed her so affectionately and with such an honest impulse, that Mrs. Marlow declared she could not help loving her tenderly and at once.

The good woman stole quietly in a number of times, after her charge had fallen asleep, to mark her breathing and assure herself that all was as it should be. Edith slept long and sweetly; her dreams were of the happiest kind, induced by the physical comforts she had realized before retiring; nor did she awake until the housekeeper attended her with a cup of coffee and a hot roll at the bedside.

How refreshed she was! She never remembered having enjoyed such rest before. How bright her eyes looked, and how heartily she laughed at Mrs. Marlow to think that she would have her eat her breakfast before rising. But she required little urging to persuade her, for the coffee was made by Mrs. Marlow's own hands, and such as she had never tasted before, and the bread was fresh and so white and light. The butter, too, was so sweet, the cream so thick and rich, and indeed everything seemed to the simple girl, in her innocence and inexperience, like a miracle.

"You have slept long and soundly, and look very much refreshed," said the housekeeper.

"O, I am so rested and refreshed," said Edith, "but what time is it?"

"Nearly one o'clock," said Mrs. Marlow, consulting her watch.

"Nearly one!" exclaimed the child, in astonishment.

"Yes, a quarter to one."

"Afternoon!"

"O, it is not luncheon time yet," said Mrs. Marlow.

"Is it possible I have slept half the day?" she asked, in amazement.

"You were very much fatigued, Edith," said the housekeeper, "and my directions were not to permit you to be disturbed at any rate."

"Indeed, you are all very kind to me," said Edith, thoughtfully.

"It is a very good hour," continued the housekeeper. "We do not lunch until two, and you have ample time to dress you before that."

"O, yes," said Edith, "I can dress me in one minute, I'm sure."

"Nay, my dear, it will require half an hour for me to dress that pretty hair of yours alone," said Mrs. Marlow, kindly.

"*You* dress my hair? O, no, no. See how quickly I can braid it up."

"Yes, my dear, but I want to do it *a la mode*," said the housekeeper.

"What's that?" asked Edith, curiously, wondering what Mrs. Marlow meant.

"I mean to dress it fashionably, my dear," said Mrs. Marlow, smiling.

"O, fashionably? Well, you shall do as you please; but it is too bad for you to have such a trouble just about my hair," said Edith.

"I have nothing else to do, my dear; so sit by the glass here, and will dress it."

The child obeyed, still wondering why so nice a woman as Mrs. Marlow should think that she must take the trouble to dress her hair.

The housekeeper, smiling at the simple notions the child entertained in relation to the matter of the toilet, soon explained to Edith that it was *his* wish for her to do so, and that she must learn to dress and appear very different from what she had done heretofore, and untwisting her soft and luxuriant hair, the good woman braided the rich tresses and plaited them so neatly and becomingly, that when Edith looked into the glass, she exclaimed with delight, and declared that Mrs. Marlow must be a witch, though a dear good one.

When the young girl met her two friends at table, what a metamorphosis had taken place in her personal appearance! She was dressed in pure white muslin, supplied by the good Mrs. Marlow. Her hair was so smooth and becoming, her long and refreshing sleep and the effect of the grateful bath she had enjoyed, added to the cheerfulness that was prompting her overflowing heart, had all together set a soft and sweetly appropriate carnation in her fair cheek that was not there before. She came so artless and happy to take the hands of both and look such wealth of gladness and thankful joy from he soft blue eyes, that Walter turned to his elder companion in silent admiration.

CHAPTER III.

THE DUEL.

——Revenge is now the end
That I do chew —I'll challenge him. BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

SIR ROBERT BROMPTON was a man of some three and fifty years, the last representation of an ancient and aristocratic family, renowned no less for their political position than for their great wealth, being a family of the old English stock. His father particularly had been distinguished for many years in parliament, and by his undeviating allegiance to the interests of the royal party, and his consistent devotedness to the interests of the king, had won the entire confidence, not only of his own party, but of the monarch himself, and in repayment he had received many distinguished hon ors at his hands. Already well endowed in the world's goods, he had been enabled by the king's favor to amass a princely fortune, and this with his honorable name and station, he transmitted to his only child, the present Sir Richard.

But the son was very unlike the father.—The latter was a domestic man, gentle, affectionate and loving, and no man could have been happier in his domestic relations. Whereas the former was impetuous, though not ungenerous, fierce when crossed in his slightest will, and from circumstances that will appear, often jealous beyond endurance. The general character and disposition of the son had been most materially affected by the occurrence of a serious and unfortunate accident, which happened to him while he was yet quite a boy, and which had caused him to be lame in one limb ever since—and thus it was very evident he must remain until the end of life. This accident which occurred at a gymnasium when he was at the age of fourteen, was of so serious a character that it laid him upon a bed for nearly a twelvemonth, and during the most of this period of time, caused him the most intense and unremitting suffering.

This year of pain, idleness and confinement was a severe trial for a high spirited and remarkably active boy, and doubtless it went far towards souring a disposition already a little peevish and restless from over-indulgence, for his parents could not find it in their heart to deny him anything, inasmuch as he was an only son. Notwithstanding this unfortunate accident, he grew up still adhering to a love and passion for a physical development of his frame, and his first visit abroad, after leaving the sick room where he had been so long confined, was to the gymnasium, when he performed the very feat successfully, which failing in before, had caused him a broken ankle.

Though he necessarily walked lame ever after, still his carriage had that easy dignity

and grace, that early and continued mingling in good society most generally impart. The cultivation of his mind, too, was far above that of the generality of the higher classes of society.

Possessed of a natural shrewdness and aptitude, he had mastered his studies promptly, and graduated with honor at an early age at Oxford. Time passed on, and his father desiring to have some trusty person to visit his immense possessions in India and to look after his interests there, induced his son to accept of a government appointment at Calcutta, and thus to go out with a double purpose. Just at this time there were some matters of the utmost delicacy being transacted in that quarter for the government, and the charge of this business fell at once into his hands. This he conducted to such a successful issue that on his return to England, though very young for the honor, he was knighted by the king.

Soon after his return, the father died and left his son the sole heir of his immense fortune, the mother having preceded Sir Robert, some years previous, to the grave. The son now found himself alone in the world, with neither kith nor kin to care for. He never had a brother and only one sister, who had died quite young. Having already run through with the ordinary dissipations of the capital before he went to India, he was thoroughly disgusted with that species of life, and it therefore held out no inducements to him. Though he was by no means of an indolent disposition, yet he had not the taste that would lead him to master fresh studies, or to engage in politics as his father had done before him, and thus in fact he rather endured life than enjoyed it, for nearly a year after the decease of his father.

Travel at last suggested itself to him as a mode whereby to drive away ennui, and in this mood he finally went abroad. After an absence of less than two years, he returned once more to London, and surprised his friends and the fashionable world by bringing with him a young and beautiful wife. One whose beauty and nobleness of bearing stamped her at once as of high descent, and who commanded immediately that attention and respect that is ever shown to dignity and beauty combined. Sir Robert Brompton was beyond a doubt, if not the best, at least one of the best matches pecuniarily speaking, in all London; and their marriage caused no little remark for a period among the beauty and fashion o the great metropolis, until the new couple settled down into domestic life.

It is true Sir Robert's wife was some twelve years his junior, and he himself was a little old-bachelorish in his feelings and notions, yet still they seemed to be very happy and cheerful together; no one even of the envious, had aught to say to the contrary. But there were clouds in the future that portended storms. Sir Robert at least could already see deepening shadows crossing their pathway.

Their house had become the centre of much fashion and style, and almost nightly balls and routs formed their evening's entertainment. Sir Robert was liberal to a fault; no wish of his wife's remained unsatisfied; and her taste and judgment had ornamented her drawing rooms to perfection. She was young an and rather inexperienced in the world's ways, very beautiful, and of course the object of much homage and attention. To say that this was not agreeable to her, would be to say that she did not possess the ordinary feelings and promptings of her sex; but to charge her with any infidelity in thought or deed to Sir Robert, would be the farthest thing possible from the truth. He was ever honored and respected by her.

And yet oftentimes when he observed her smiling and enjoying the homage of some sleek, well-formed sprig of the aristocracy, he would glance at his own unseemly lameness, and, shrugging his shoulders, utter a half-suppressed sigh. That he loved his wife tenderly, was beyond a question; his every day life gave ample proof of this, and at heart he also believed that his love was fully returned.

Lord Henry Amherst, a young man of surpassing attractions, both mentally and in his manly and noble bearing, about this period became acquainted with the lady of Sir Robert Brompton. He was a frequent guest at her parties, and a constant and devoted follower in her train. His position and title in grade, were considerably above those of the Brompton family, and the lady could not but feel flattered by his open and devoted attention to her; but it was her vanity only that was pleased.

Sir Robert at first noticed him no more than he did a score of other visitants at his house and board, until by some chance a whispered remark one night, though not addressed to him, yet met his ear, and a live coal dropped upon powder could hardly have been more instantaneous in its effect. He became as watchful of Lord Amherst as though he were his bitterest enemy, seeking to injure him in the keenest point; his very glances were met half-way by those of Sir Robert, who sought by thus intercepting, to interpret them. He was far too proud to speak to his wife upon that subject; indeed the idea of doing such a thing, never for a moment crossed his mind.

Satisfied at last that Lord Amherst's intentions upon his wife were of no honorable character, Sir Robert took an opportunity on one or two occasions to evince to him that his visits were no longer desirable, so far as he was concerned, at his house. But his lordship was too strongly attached to take the hint at all, and continued both his visits and his attention to Sir Robert's lady, with most constant devotion. As this sort of life went on, Sir Robert's naturally jealous disposition began to ripen,

——"For his mind
Had grown suspicion's sanctuary."

and he consequently magnified the most trifling familiarities into matters of the greatest import; and though he said nothing, yet he brooded in secret over the feelings that influenced him, until he felt sure that his wife had married him not for himself alone, but for his known wealth, and to suit herself with a position in life, where, by her management, she could draw about her such as would please her vanity and taste. Indeed it looked so plain to him now, that he thought himself a fool not to have discovered it before.

Every kind word that his wife uttered to him, now seemed to his jealous heart impregnated with gall and falsehood; and every gentle and affectionate look, was set down by his suspicious soul as a lie. Yet still, for all this, he felt that he loved her beyond all else in life, and that, in spite of these harrowing thoughts, she was most incalculably dear to him. "O," he would exclaim, "would to God that I were a poor man, and she my wife; would that I could prove that she loved me truly and faithfully."

Still most innocently did the lady of Sir Robert Brompton smile gratefully upon Lord Amherst, a consideration which he, of course, translated with a lover's eye; and still he allowed her with all the devotion of one completely enslaved and infatuated by her beauty. The annoyance that Sir Robert thus endured, can hardly be calculated; he was continually upon coals of fire, and he felt that this could not continue long.

It was nearly the hour for breaking up the dance and merriment, one night at their hospitable mansion, when Sir Robert, who kept his eyes constantly upon Lord Amherst, saw him pick up the lady's handkerchief, which she had apparently dropped by accident, and also observed him slip within its folds a billet, and then turning abruptly, leave the apartment. Sir Robert immediately hastened to his wife's side, and after pausing for a moment so as not to appear abrupt, said:

"Your handkerchief a moment, my dear, some dust has fallen upon your mantle, and I will brush it off."

Unconscious of having received any note or aught else of an improper character from Lord Amherst, the lady at once, smilingly, handed the handkerchief to Sir Robert, from which he extracted the note, and after pretending to brush her mantle, he returned it to her again, satisfied that she at least was innocent of Lord Amherst's effort to communicate with her in this clandestine manner. He retired at once to read the note.

Having reached the privacy of his library, he opened the note and read as follows:

"Dearest Lady:

"It must be that ere this you have discovered the burning and ungovernable passion that I bear you. live only in the light of your smiles, and am impatient and unhappy every hour that I pass away from your side. I have never dared to tell you this, but I have looked it a hundred times. Ah! lady, give me leave to hope that this feeling, that possesses my whole soul, is mutual. Do not drive me from you, for thus speaking frankly the devotion that prompts me. I will not ask you to write to me, but give me a flower, a leaf, a ring, anything, dear lady, that I may understand as a token of encouragement. O, how impatiently I shall await the moment when

we shall meet again, after you shall have read this. May I not then hope to receive some simple token of encouragement?

"Devotedly yours,

AMHERST."

Sir Robert Brompton was not a man to throw away words in invectives, or waste strength in profitless anger. He did pause for a moment, to wonder within his own mind what his wife would have done, had she received this missive; and the thought crossed him that it might be well to send it to her still, as a sort of test to try her, and be on the watch for the result. But this was in a moment after rejected, as unworthy of his own character, and of the relationship he bore her. A moment's pause only was necessary for him to make up his mind, as to what was most proper for him to do. He sat down and wrote to Lord Amherst, simply enclosing the guilty letter, and telling him that it was useless to multiply words about such a matter as this, that he should expect from him the immediate satisfaction that one gentleman is ever ready to accord to another, and finished by saying that his friend, who was the bearer of this note, could arrange matters on the spot, for their meeting at daybreak next morning, and that both for his lordship's sake and his own, he trusted that the *cause* of their encounter should remain a secret even to their seconds. He closed and sealed this, and addressed it to Lord Amherst.

Hurrying to the ball-room before it should be entirely cleared, Sir Robert singled out the most fitting person for his object, and returning with him to the library, placed the matter before him at once, of course, observing the strictest secrecy relative to the cause of the collision. He urged upon his friend the utmost dispatch, and having arranged a few necessary matters, separated from him. Fortunately he had chosen one well calculated to act as his second, in this delicate affair.

Sir Robert's messenger, after reaching Lord Amherst's quarter, sent up his name and also word that he wished to see his lordship on business of the utmost importance. Thus summoned, though at such an unseasonable hour, Mr. Wardsworth, the bearer of the note, was admitted, and his lordship received him in the drawing room in his dressing gown.

"I was somewhat surprised at the hour you have chosen for your call, Mr. Wardsworth," said Lord Amherst, "but from the character of your message by the servant, I thought it best to see you."

"I come on business, my lord, that will admit of no delay."

"Indeed, sir."

"Your lordship will oblige me by casting your eye over this," said Mr. Wardsworth, handing the note that Sir Robert had addressed to him.

Lord Amherst opened the seal and turned first pale, then red, for he understood its meaning. He paused for a moment in thought, and then said:

"I presume you do not know the contents of this note, sir?"

"I do not; that concerns me not, as my friend, Sir Robert, did not see fit to impart it to me—but as it regards the other matter, I'm fully prepared."

"True; you refer to the meeting," said Lord Amherst, abstractedly.

"Exactly, sir. I should like to consult your lordship's taste as far as practicable."

"Thank you, sir," said his lordship, a little stiffly.

"I would suggest Round Head Moor, as a fitting place."

"Very well, sir."

"And pistols at fifteen paces," continued Mr. Wardsworth, in quite a business style.

"That will suit me very well," said Lord Amherst, curling the note in his hand.

"Perhaps your lordship will name the hour," said Mr. Wardsworth.

"As soon as the light will serve—the sooner the better, sir."

"Your lordship is very prompt, and my principal will meet you at the Moor at daylight," said Mr. Wardsworth, "and in the meantime, I have the honor to wish you good night."

"Good night, sir," said Lord Amherst, ringing for a servant to show him out.

Neither Sir Robert nor Lord Amherst slept that night, but both prepared to pass from the gay scenes of the ball-room to one of bloodshed. The few intervening moments were employed by each in making such brief arrangements relative to business matters, as might guard against casualty.

Before the morning sun had risen, they met in due form on Round Head Moor, in those days quite out of town, but now embraced within the limits of the great city itself.

Lord Amherst looked pale, but not from fear. Though he had much of the coxcomb in his character, yet he was no craven; but that which paled his cheek was the guilt that he could not but acknowledge to his own heart. He lacked that inward sense of justice that inspires a man who stands up for a good cause. The truth was, he felt that he had wronged his opponent, and that he stood there a guilty man.

Sir Robert came upon the ground without any change evinced in his countenance; he was calm and collected, and bowing courteously to all parties, waited for the seconds to arrange the necessary preliminaries. This done, the combatants took their places as pointed out to them by their seconds.

"Are you ready?" asked the second on whom it had devolved to give the word.

A token of assent was observed from either party.

"One—two—fire!"

The reports of the two pistols were simultaneous.

Sir Robert Brompton folded his arms and remained unharmed where he stood; but Lord Amherst was shot so severely in the right limb, that he could not stand. The seconds declared that the object of the meeting was consummated, and the parties, according to the rules of honor, discharged.

Sir Robert then approached Lord Amherst, and said in a low tone of voice:

"My lord, as the injury that you have done to me is but a partial one, so did I aim only to wound you; had the injury been deeper, believe me, sir, I should have aimed at your *heart*, and those who know me can tell your lordship whether I am apt to miss my aim. But let me not taunt a wounded man."

"Say on, sir," said Lord Amherst, drawing a sigh at the pain he felt; "I was in the wrong, and can see it now plainly enough, since passion has been cooled by this encounter."

"Farewell, sir," said Sir Robert; "I wish for your own sake that your repentance had come earlier."

The encounter between Sir Robert and Lord Amherst was kept a profound secret, nor did his wife, even, know that any trouble had occurred between them. She supposed that a severe indisposition, caused by fever, was the reason of his lordship's absence, and matters went on at her parties as before.

In no way did Sir Robert change towards his wife. He was the same to her outwardly, as he had ever been; but the cankering worm gnawed at his heart still. In his domestic relations, he was thoroughly miserable, and the more so, perhaps, from the fact, that his feelings found no outward vent.

At this stage of his domestic affairs, his property in India bade fair to demand his immediate and individual attention. The immense extent of this possession and its enormous value, was such, that he did not feel inclined to permit it to suffer in any way from want of proper supervision, and he determined to make the voyage thither and back again as soon as it could be performed, and at the same time accomplish his purpose. Dreading to evince in any way that he was in the least jealous of his wife, he resolved not to take her with him. In his sensitiveness he feared that an idea of taking her with him, expressed by himself, would lead her to think that he was *fearful* to leave her at home without him.

What a very coward suspicion will make of a man!

He could not be long away, he thought, a year at most, and then he would return. Return! alas, he cared but little whether he ever returned to London again.

His parting with his wife had nearly led to a full and honest confession on his part, of the fears and doubts that had brooded in his heart, for she hung upon him so fondly, and wept so bitterly at the prospect of their long separation, that for a time, Sir Robert was equally balanced in his mind as to whether he should not seize upon so propitious a moment as was now afforded him, to acknowledge the anguish that he felt on her account, frankly own to her that he believed his doubts and fear without foundation, and beg her to forgive him for ever entertaining so much as a thought reflecting upon her honesty to him. But that pride, which formed so large an ingredient of his nature, forbade him to do so. He was kind and gentle in his leave-taking, and thus still unhappy, bade her farewell.

As a companion and assistant to him in

matters of business, Sir Robert Brompton took with him on his voyage an humble, but intelligent friend, one whose acquaintance and friendship he had made and cultivated in college, and whom he had learned to like for his many good qualities, though he was of very humble origin, and indeed at that time, a sort of charity student at the university. But Sir Robert, even when a mere lad, was not one to pass by humble merit unrecognized, and they became lasting and true friends. Frederick Howard was only too happy to leave the humble situation which he filled, as attachè to some city magazine, to go abroad, and also to accept the liberal pecuniary offer that Sir Robert made him for his services.

"When we were in college together, I liked you," said Sir Robert, "because you were not a fawning, cringing, flattering hanger-on upon those who were more fortunate in the possession of the world's goods, than yourself."

"I know how to appreciate your generous patronage, nevertheless, Sir Robert," replied his friend, smiling.

"Well, enough of that matter; but what think you? Can this arrangement be made to suit you? Not exactly a clerk, you understand, but a friend and assistant—eh, Mr. Howard?"

"It will suit me exactly, sir."

"Very good; then it is a bargain," said Sir Robert. "Now, get ready as speedily as possible, for I am impatient to be on ship-board."

Mr. Howard was about the same age as Sir Robert. He had tasted the bitter cup of misfortune, nay, had even drank its contents to the very dregs, and was consequently in his feelings not a little misanthropic. But yet his mind was too well balanced, to permit this to amount to any actual defect in his general character. In a long voyage, where they were thrown so constantly together, it was but natural that there should be considerable interchange of feeling and thought between them, and for one possessing the peculiar feelings of Sir Robert, it was not singular that he should sympathize in no small degree with the sometimes remarkable philosophy and theories of the companion he had chosen. Having known him so long, Sir Robert treated him more like a brother than a mere friend, and thus it was that Frederick Howard often spoke to him so plainly.

"When you were first married, Sir Robert," said his companion one day, as they sat together, "you seemed to belie my theory altogether, as to there being no love beyond the immediate promptings of self-interest, for you and your lady seemed most happy and contented together."

"When I was *first* married?" said Sir Robert, in a tone of surprise.

"Ay, I mean for a year or two," replied his companion.

"For a year or two, Mr. Howard!" repeated Sir Robert, thoughtfully, at the same time rising with a troubled air, he walked the cabin for some moments in silence, evincing the while no slight tokens of agitation. At last he paused, and asked more coolly:

"You think I'm changed then, Mr. Howard. Pray how am I altered?"

"To an ordinary observer," said his companion, "perhaps not at all; but to me, who have observed you carefully for many years, you are much altered."

"Indeed, indeed," said his patron, still walking to and fro.

"Sir Robert, I think I may speak without the fear of offending you. You know me too well, I believe, to suppose I have any sinister motives in doing so; therefore, I will even venture to say that which under ordinary circumstances would be presuming in me."

"Speak freely, Mr. Howard, speak freely, and I shall only feel that you are the better and truer friend to me," said Sir Robert.

"Thank you for your confidence, Sir Robert, and I will endeavor to deserve it."

His companion had, as he intimated, watched him with no little interest, and in his shrewdness and knowledge of human nature, he had suspected the true state of Sir Robert's feelings, and possessing this cue, he was enabled to satisfy himself of the fact beyond a doubt, as to his patron's being jealous and unhappy in relation to his wife. This he frankly told him, and by way of consolation, wrought with his philosophy upon Sir Robert, who frankly owned the truth. This confidence between them having once transpired, their intimacy, of course, became redoubled, and Mr. Howard gained the utmost influence over Sir Robert, who submitted with all confidence his most private interests to the supervision and direction of his friend.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WRECK.

Had I been any god of power, I would
Have sunk the sea within the earth, ere
It should the good ship so have swallowed. TEMPEST.

THE business that had brought Sir Robert Brompton to India became more intricate in its character than he had at first anticipated, and he found soon after landing, that so far from being able to return by the same ship that had brought him from England, he might find it necessary to remain abroad even a year or more, and finding also that unless he did so his pecuniary loss would be immense, he wrote his wife the circumstances of the case by the returning vessel, and assured her of his earliest possible return.

It was a sickly season in India, and Sir Robert had been domesticated there but a few months when he was taken very ill with that fearful scourge the small pox, ever terrible, but doubly so in a hot climate. His sickness was a prolonged one, and his life even, at one time was despaired of. But Frederick Howard proved to be a true and consistent friend to his patron, never leaving his side night or day, patiently tending and waiting upon him with all the tenderness of a woman, until at last Sir Robert was improving and finally became comparatively well. Rarely does this disease visit any one in hot climates without leaving the marks of its ravages upon the skin, and so it was with Sir Robert, whose face was, though not seriously, yet considerably disfigured by it.

Knowing as much as the reader already does of Sir Robert Brompton's character and general disposition, he will at once realize that this disfigurement, though in reality of such trifling import, was yet to him additional cause for secret unhappiness as it regarded his personal appearance. If he before had been annoyed by the unfortunate circumstance of his lameness, he was thrice as much disconcerted by this additional and equally prominent blemish, and in his moodishness and misanthropic spirit he counted himself as absolutely horrible and repulsive to the sight of those about him. If his wife had heretofore contrasted his appearance with that of the gay frequenters of her drawing-rooms. what would she do now? He almost shuddered at the contemplation of the idea.

Each hour he seemed to grow more dejected, until one day, a proud ship came into port bearing St. George's cross, with news from England. But sad news, alas, it was for him. It brought him letters stating that his wife had been suddenly taken with a fever which had proved fatal, and she was dead.

This entirely unexpected vicissitude changed the whole current of Sir Robert's feelings. He forgot himself in his sincere sorrow for the departed, his deformities which he had magnified into such importance were no longer thought of. Had Sir Robert been on the most perfect terms of understanding with his wife, he could not have mourned her loss more sincerely, and for a long period his grief seemed completely to absorb him. Now that she was gone and lost to him forever, he solemnly believed that she had been true to him, beyond a doubt, and in his heart he honestly subscribed to her purity.

Sir Robert was right, his wife was pure and true to him, and though she had mingled freely in the gay world of London, she was unscathed by the contest.

"Ere sin could blight or sorrow fade
Death came with timely care ——"

With ample and special directions to manage his affairs in London, Sir Robert despatched his friend Howard to England, resolving himself to stay at least a few months longer in India, until the poignancy of his grief was assuaged, and the world should have forgotten his sorrow. For counting its sympathy hollow and heartless, he could not patiently have borne to meet its false sympathy; he preferred to keep his grief sacred, and sorrow alone within his own heart.

The few months that Sir Robert had intended to remain at Calcutta after the departure of his friend were swelled into some four years and over, before he made up his mind to return to England. In the mean time his agent, the trust-worthy Frederick Howard, had regularly despatched to him full intelligence of the matters that he had charge of in London, and thus Sir Robert felt no anxiety about his affairs at home. At last, however, he closed up his business matters in India, and prepared for a homeward bound voyage.

He finally embarked in the good ship Northumberland, with every prospect of a quick and pleasant voyage. They took a pilot on board to bring the ship through the sea of Bengal to the south'ard of Ceylon, from whence they would lay their course, and open the Indian ocean.

It is a lively and happy time on board when the homeward-bound ship loosens her canvass and moves through the water. Even Sir Robert entered into the spirit that seemed to pervade every soul on board, and noted each order and preparation that arranged the large ship for the voyage with marked interest. She was a picture of nautical beauty, with everything set that would draw—for your East Indiaman spreads a cloud of canvass on the long voyage. With her courses, topsails, topgallants and royals, she bowled along at a six knot rate over the blue waters of the Indian Bay. Even her becket main sky-sail was filled to the wind on her courses, a graceful tiny sky scraper that furls neatly, when need be, with the main royal.

They had scarcely doubled the southern coast of Ceylon and prepared to land the pilot, when a fierce squall came leaping over the sea, and whirling in the air with a fury that made the oldest seaman on board the Northumberland look toward the quarter deck for orders to meet the emergency. The pilot's quick eye saw it at once, and he leaped back to the station which he was just about to leave as commander of the ship, for the time being. With a quick perception of the danger and the means to prevent it, he issued his orders at once with the coolness and rapidity, so requisite at times on the ocean, and which showed him master of his noble profession.

"The water darkens, and the rustling sound
Tells of the coming squall."

"All hands shorten sail," shouted the pilot from the quarter deck.

The crew of a well regulated ship are all trained to know their stations, and when an order is issued, there is no jostling or indecision—each man knows his duty.

"Lay aft here, and brail up the spanker. Lay aloft and furl."

Already "ay, ay, sir," was responded to each order by those who sprung to fulfil it.

"Bear a hand forward there, down with the flying jib and stow it, some of ye run up and help hand the topgallant sails."

"Keep the ship off a bit,—steady—so."

"Steady, it is, sir," said the attentive helmsman, as he fell off his course a couple of points to give the men aloft a chance to work to better advantage.

These and other orders followed each other in quick succession, and were obeyed with that

alacrity and promptness that characterizes all manœuvres at sea. The ship though greatly relieved by the spread of canvass that had been taken in, yet reached through the water like a race horse, while the squall seemed to be ripening into a gale. The black clouds were driving on in thick array, and big drops of rain mingled with the gusts of wind, until at last it poured in torrents from the sky. Though near mid-day, yet it became almost as dark as night, and the seamen put on their storm clothes with ominous looks at these startling signs of the weather, which foreboded hard work for them.

Seeing he promptness and ability of the pilot, the captain of the Northumberland had at the commencement of the squall sprung into the waist of the ship and borne a hand with he rest of the crew in obeying the orders that were issued. There being now a pause, he came aft again.

"She staggers under it, Mr. Pilot," he said, looking at the canvass that the ship still spread to the storm, and observing the way in which she plunged into the sea.

"True, she does strain a little," said the pilot, with a quick eye directed about the ship.

"Hadn't we better get in the mainsail?" suggested the captain.

"Not yet, we must weather these points before it will do to take in any more," said the officer, as he instructed the man at the helm to steer "small."

"Nothing off, sir, nothing off," repeated the pilot sternly, to the man at the helm.

Already the sea was blown and tossed into a perfect fury, and run tremendously high, and having gained the desired point, the order was at last given by the pilot.

"Stand by to take in the mainsail, ease off the sheet, up with it, lively—so—belay that, ease away the tacks, so—well—furl."

Following these orders, the huge sheet of canvass was soon strongly lashed in place.

"Stand by to reef topsails. *Close* reef topsails. Haul down the jib."

"Mr. Mate," said the pilot to a smart, intelligent sailor who filled that post.

"Ay, ay, sir," responded the mate.

"Now hoist the foretopmast staysail, that's it, cheerily, cheerily, boys, with a will there," said the pilot, in encouraging tones.

"In with your foretopsail."

To one not acquainted with the gear of a ship, it may be well to say that the sail which the pilot had just ordered set, was a sort of storm sail, and having got the ship in hand, he found her, although laboring hard, yet safe. In this gear they run for some hours to the south'ard, at a speed that placed all calculation at fault. The sea all the while increasing in violence until at last a heavy wave combed over the taffrail, half engulfing the helmsman, and causing him to let the ship yaw off proudly, as seamen say. The heft of the sea, however, passed under the ship as she lifted like a sea bird upon its swell.

"Where are you carrying the ship to?" shouted the pilot, abruptly. "What are you about? Don't you see your wake broad off the lee beam!"

The helmsman, who was really a good sailor, was disconcerted, and shoved the helm hard down at once to recover his course, which caused the ship to broach to, with such force and rapidity that it seemed utterly impossible to meet her with the helm in time.

"Meet her!" shouted the pilot from the weather main rigging.

"Ay, ay, sir," said the man, struggling at his post of duty.

"Meet her, I say!" again shouted the pilot, angrily, leaping upon the deck and rushing aft to enforce his order: for to his experienced eye all depended upon this movement.

Seizing the helm, he endeavored to remedy the trouble by his own skill.

But it was too late. The ship came gracefully up in the wind, and in the next moment was taken aback, losing her steerage way, and was thrown at once on her beam ends. Every one rushed to secure a hold upon some object that might seem to give even temporary support, and all discipline seemed lost. The captain and some of the crew were already missing and were doubtless drowned. It was a trying time, such as proves a man, and such an one as few men are equal to. The pilot of the Northumberland was quite a young man to fill such a station, but he proved himself fully equal to the task.

"Steady, for your lives!" he shouted to a small knot of seamen nearest to him, in a voice that was distinctly heard above the din of the rushing waters and howling storm.

The men, accustomed to strict discipline, and

to obey the voice of authority, stood firm, and watched their young commander like those who felt the power of a directing mind.

"Forward there with your hatchets! Promptly, men, it's no time for play now! Cut way the foremast, lee lanyards first, well —now the weather."

A few strokes of the axe, and the mast snapped off like a pipe-stem and went by the board, for the strain upon it was immense. The head stays were cut loose from the bowsprit, and the ship drifted free from the wreck, while the pilot paused for a moment to see what effect this movement would have upon the hull of the Northumberland. It was only for a moment, when he cried:

"Hurra! She lifts a bit. Lay aft here, and cut away the mizzen."

This order was obeyed in a like manner with that which had removed the foremast. As the dismembered spar cleared itself, it also dragged the main topmast off the cap, and thus relieved, the ship slowly righted, but not without having shipped a large quantity of water.

It will be observed that the Northumberland had still her mainmast standing, and of course with it the main spencer; a sail which brails to the mast itself. Consequently those in command of the ship had only to haul aft the main spencer sheet, and put the helm down, although she was a third full of water and a partial wreck, to lay her to, snugly, even in a hard gale, and this was at once done.

All through the series of catastrophes that beset the noble ship, Sir Robert Brompton had been as calm as it was possible for any one to be under such circumstances. He was too much of a philosopher to fear death, nor had life such strong ties with him as to make him tremble at the thought of leaving it. He had found time more than once during the struggle of the elements, to admire the self-possession of the young pilot, who seemed to be equal to any emergency, and to rise in ability and skill in a ratio with the increase of danger, and the demand upon him for the exercise of these qualities. To look upon, he was scarcely more than a boy, and yet he had held the ship in complete control during the whole period of her danger, as far as any human being might do so, and had, as we have seen, rescued her from a most perilous and appalling situation.

The men were impressed with the utmost confidence in the young officer, for no one knows quicker than your foremast hand, whether the ship is handled in a masterly manner, and if this is the case, admiration and respect are both the result, in Jack's honest heart. The pilot ordered some refreshments dealt out to the crew, with a small ration of spirit to each man, for they had tasted neither food nor drink for many long hours, and they partook of both like famished men. These refreshments came from the cabin stores, and were better than the fare they were accustomed to in the forecastle, which gave it additional zest, and also pleased the men as a mark of consideration and kindness from those above them.

The brief meal was hurriedly partaken of when the order came from the pilot:

"Stand by, to man the pumps.

"Ay, ay, sir," shouted a dozen willing voices; and there is a charm in the promptness with which a mariner responds, both in word and action, to the orders at sea.

"Clap on there in earnest," said the pilot pleasantly to the men—"we've water enough along side, and can't afford it stowage on board. In earnest, men, in earnest!"

Thus encouraged and directed, the men applied themselves with vigor to the work, and burst forth in the long drawling "ye-ho-boys," such as they sing when the windlass is manned, and the ponderous anchor is hove up preparatory to the long voyage.

"You have these men in complete control," remarked Sir Robert to the young officer, as he stood on the quarter deck issuing his orders.

"O yes, sir. In our profession men will always follow your lead, if it is ship-shape."

"You seem very young, sir, for the responsible station you hold."

"The greater part of my life has been passed upon the water," replied the pilot.

"And to good purpose, too," said Sir Robert, "for you certainly possess every requisite of coolness and prompt judgment."

Every now and then the pilot bore a hand at the pumps with the rest, though his attention was required frequently at the other part of the ship, but he constantly incited the men with those prompt and cheerful orders that sound so well from the lips of those in command on the ocean.

Sir Robert laid his hands stoutly to the pumps, and with his extraordinary strength was of no small service as it regarded clearing the ship of water. The unremitting efforts of all hands at last cleared the ship, and she was found on examination to be tight, though severely strained in her timbers.

Though the wind had somewhat subsided, yet it still blew very fresh, besides which it was dead ahead for those in the ship, and thus prevented their laying their course back to port again. They supposed themselves to be in the track of homeward bound European vessels, and therefore resolved to run free awhile, until the weather should be such as to enable them to discover their latitude. But in the mean time, though with the ship's head to the west, still the Northumberland drifted with great speed to the south, and although they perceived this, yet it was beyond their power to avoid it, since they had not even the ordinary means to withstand the contrary wind, to say nothing of the set of the current.

"How think you this will end?" asked Sir Robert, of the pilot, one day.

"Heaven only knows, sir, skill can effect nothing in our case."

"The current seems to set us still to the south, with much rapidity."

"It does, I have noticed it these two days past as stronger than ever."

"As it changes our position, it may prove a blessing after all," said Sir Robert.

"Possibly, but I fear it only gets us hourly from the track of vessels."

"We must hope for the best, and let time decide our fate," said Sir Robert.

The crew of the ship had lost one half their number, including the captain, in the height of the gale. But they were cheerful and in good discipline still, and kept up their spirits bravely, notwithstanding that the stout ship, though with one good sail upon her, was still but little better than a log upon the water.

The simplest comprehension on board the wreck of the Northumberland could easily understand the peril of their situation, for allowing that they were so fortunate as to escape a gale, and thus be engulfed, still each passing hour brought them nearer and nearer to the end of their supply of provisions, which were dealt out only on short allowance at this time, in sad anticipation of the period when the last ration would be upon the mess table, and famine stare them boldly in the face. One or two moderate rains had fortunately supplied them with fresh water, which was also carefully caught and preserved, for experience teaches the sailor the true value of water. In short, everything that experience and care could do to avert their final sufferings was promptly performed by the pilot's orders, who seemed to be peculiarly fitted to meet the present emergency.

Sometimes for days together they would be totally becalmed, and while Sir Robert and the pilot became better acquainted in the cabin, the seamen forward whiled away the time with forecastle yarns.

It is a natural propensity that seems to attach itself to a seaman to spin a yarn, or listen to one, at every leisure moment; he takes as naturally to story-telling as a fish does to water. The heel of the bowsprit, and the immediate vicinity of the forecastle is sacred ground to him, his memory associates all of romance that he has ever heard with this spot, and as a component part of the ship, it is scarcely less honored than the sacred precincts of the quarter deck itself. The one, stern discipline has taught him to respect, but the other he loves for the memories that he associates with it, and the yarns he has listened to there, during the long watches in the tropics, or in the lull of the storm.

Your old sea dog who has been many a long voyage, and whose exterior presents a rough and storm-beaten appearance, to look upon, would seem to be the very opposite of any thing like sensibility, and to have as little tenderness or delicacy of feeling in his composition as the ship's rudder itself; but many a tear has that old salt shed in his night watch while he listened to the characteristic story of some messmate. Beneath that blue jacket beats a Christian heart, often-times more Christian than your landsman, whose every-day contact with the selfish and overreaching about him, hardens his nature, and blunts the sensibility of his heart.

The world on shore grows selfish and pinching in their dispositions, but who ever saw a real Jack tar who was not generous to a fault? Ready to share his last dollar with his messmate, or to freely spend for others, the money which he has labored so hard and risked so much to obtain.

CHAPTER V.

THE SOLITARY ISLAND.

O, had we some bright little isle of our own,
In the blue summer ocean far off and alone! MOORE.

DAYS, nay, weeks had passed on, and the wrecked vessel, still driven by the currents and the wind, was now fairly lost in the boundless extent of the southern ocean, and as all on board were but too well aware, far away from the track of all known commerce.

The people on board the Northumberland began to despair of ever again reaching their home, for the ship would hardly steer at all by what convass they could spread upon her. True, she might at times be said to have steerage way, but this was so, doubtfully contested with the winds and currents that beset her, that it afforded no degree of hope. A shade of despair pervaded the countenances now of even the boldest; some pretended to laugh away their fears and the apprehensions that others freely indulged in, but when they thought themselves unobserved, they showed by their countenances that the lamp of hope, if burning at all within their hearts, was but dim indeed. Still there was no repining, no grumbling, all seemed to be patiently awaiting for the next gale to come, which would beyond a doubt sweep the ship and all hands into eternity. But they could not read the future.

It was a mild night on the sea; the waters had changed colors with the heavens, the deep blue was now above, lit up by millions of stars, the silvery fleece of the noon-day sky was on the face of the waters, and those on board of the Northumberland seemed to be floating upon one boundless molten sea of silver. The moon shone almost too brightly, we mean too brightly for the loneliness of heart that pervaded the wreck, and you might trace the moon's wake upon the sea, by a deepened glowing column into a distance that would make the eye ache, and the brain to tire. Some leaned listlessly over the bulwarks and gazed into the deep, others slept beneath the broad canopy of heaven; here were a knot gathered of some five or six who were spinning yarns of their former adventures and of stories that they had picked up in their roving profession, until at last all save a single officer and the man at the helm, were asleep.

The officer was walking the quarter deck thoughtfully, pausing now and then to study the strange and lonely picture that surrounded him, now upon the sea and now among the sleepers, who perhaps were happy in their dreams, and in fancy once more beholding

that land which in their waking moments they had so fervently and constantly prayed for. Once the officer walked forward among the slumbering crew with a noiseless step, and paused to study the expressions of those bronzed faces beneath the broad moon light, but with half a smile and half a sigh, he walked aft again to the quarter deck.

It was the morning watch, for the strictest discipline was still enforced on board of the Northumberland; the pilot and Sir Robert, who were the directing minds there, knowing full well that this was the only means to preserve contentment and ensure even the possibility of their eventual rescue and safety. Had each one of the motley crew been permitted to use his own discretion or fancy, in the sad state they were in, the wreck would have become a second Babel, and riot and debauch would soon have defeated every well digested hope, for the improvement of any chance advantage that fortune might cast in their way.

As the break of day gradually lighted up the eastern horizon and cast its wakening light over the expanse of waters, it discovered the officer of the deck to be the young pilot whose master spirit had coped so skillfully with the raging tempest. With the growing light he carefully scanned the horizon with his glass until he seemed to rivet it at last upon one spot, and to regard that with the utmost care. He was too thorough a seaman to give a false alarm, but approaching the helmsman he said quietly:

"Jack."

"Ay, ay, sir."

"Take a look through the glass hereaway, a point or so off the larboard bow."

The man, depositing his cap upon the deck as a mark of respect, while the pilot took the helm, fixed the glass upon the desired point, and gazed for more than a minute without speaking. Then turning to his officer, he looked him in the face without a word, but a big tear rolled down either of his rough sunburnt cheeks. Manly tears of joy, the outpouring of a longing spirit!

"Well, Jack, what do you see?" asked the pilot, who was resolved to satisfy himself oy other eyes than his own, before he gave full credence to his supposition.

"Land, sir!" replied the man, with a quivering lip!

"Isn't it the blowing of a whale, or the back of a big fish, Jack?"

"No, your honor," said the helmsman, drawing the back of his hand across his eyes, "nothing but land could loom up after that fashion."

Leaping into the main-shrouds, the pilot ascended to the head of the main-mast, and once more carefully studied the point which had engaged his attention. He awaited for a few moments the more complete break of day, and then descended to the deck with a spirit that he had not before evinced for many a long day. Already many of the crew were awake, and observing the change in their commander's manner, were on the alert at once, nor had all fairly aroused, when his clear, manly voice shouted:

"Lay aft here, and ease away the main spencer sheet."

This order told the story at once to every one, and being followed by another to the helmsman to fall off a couple of points from his course, all knew that they were standing for some object ahead. The crew were looking out now from the bows, and soon after sunrise discovered with the naked eye,

"Fluttering between the dun wave and the sky,"

the green hills and soft foliage of a low tropical island. To their longing eyes and anxious hearts, it seemed the fairy-like shape of Paradise itself. They became almost intoxicated with delight, and there was not a dry eye on board the wreck as they were borne on by the breeze, and let go their anchor in a snug but deep bay that seemed opening its arms to receive them. It was scooped out by nature for the very purpose of a safe harbor, sheltered on all sides from the wind, by gently sloping and green-clad hills.

"I have read of such spots as this in fairy tales," said Sir Robert to the pilot, as both stood gazing almost entranced at this lovely gem of the ocean.

"Any *land* would look incomparably beautiful to us now," said the pilot.

"What an abundance of vegetation and of animals too," said Sir Robert, observing a herd of goats on a sloping hill-side not far inland.

"But there are no trees of any size that I can see," said the pilot, whose practised eye was looking for the means of supplying the Northumberland once more with masts and spars.

"How are we to get ashore?" asked Sir Robert; "there's not a boat left us."

"Look over the side, Sir Robert, I've set the boys to work already."

"O, a raft," said his companion, observing the spirit of alacrity with which half a dozen men were placing together pieces of timber lowered to them by others from the deck.

Upon this hastily formed, yet secure conveyance, Sir Robert, the pilot, and all of the crew save three, who were left with arms and ammunition to prevent a surprise should the ship be visited by natives, went on shore, in the first place to obtain some fresh provisions, and in the next to explore the island, and see what resources it afforded that might be turned to advantage in their peculiar situation.

A very brief survey was sufficient to discover to Sir Robert and the pilot that the island which they had thus providentially been thrown upon, was uninhabited by human beings, and that it had probably never before been visited by the foot of man. Notwithstanding there were a great profusion of animals, such as goats, hares, and a small kind of deer like a gazelle. There were many kinds of birds too, indigenous to the tropics, with an innumerable variety of ducks and water fowls, generally so tame and fearless that the sailors easily secured them with their hands alone. Turtles and tortoises abounded on the shore, and were looked upon with longing eyes by the men, who promised themselves most luxurious feasting.

The fruits seemed to grow in the most rank abundance and richness, and the men partook freely of plantains, bananas, cocoanuts, and the bread fruit, with many others, racy and most grateful to their palates, for which however they knew no name. From a rocky shelf on a hill side that overlooked the little harbor, a cool, limpid spring bubbled forth from the cleft of the rock, tumbling into a natural basin, where the deer and goats came to drink. The first effort of the crew was to reach this water and slake their thirst, and refresh their bodies by bathing in it. Few know how to value the blessing of pure fresh water who have not suffered for the want of it at sea. With this luxury among the rest, the crew of the Northumberland, after drifting about the ocean for nearly four months, living upon salt provisions alone, now feasted like princes upon the fat of the land.

The raft served them in their impatience very well for the time being, and also afterwards for the transportation of heavy materials, but the carpenter was at once set to work to build a commodious and safe boat for the use of all. This was no trifling matter in a spot where the material must be got out of old stock taken from the ship, and it was weeks even before the people of the ship could make the passage to the shore save upon the large and cumbersome raft that had at first been constructed. But under the guidance of Sir Robert and the pilot, matters went on very smoothly, and everything was done with a purpose, and an eye to the husbanding of such articles as, once consumed, it would be impossible for them again to supply. For this reason sea biscuit became a prohibited article, and flour was not allowed to be used on any consideration, except in the smallest possible quantity in cooking; it was an article that would keep at sea, and they foresaw in their providence a use for it when vegetables might not be had.

Tents were raised upon the island with the ship's spare canvass in well sheltered and secure places, and the provisions which had become wet by exposure during the storm they had experienced, were brought on shore and carefully dried, and preserved in a snug cellar prepared for their reception. By degrees the ship itself was taken to pieces and brought to the shore, timber after timber, and piece by piece, for she was of no use to them as she then was, where wood could not be obtained to put masts into her; and besides it was discovered that she was strained below the water lines beyond their power to repair.

The idea of building a small vessel from her material had struck the minds of the pilot and Sir Robert at the outset, and thus every spar, plank and bolt were carefully preserved and carried on shore, until the good ship Northumberland had entirely disappeared. She had of course ample spare articles in the way of ship chandlery to fit up a smaller vessel indifferently well, and these with the arti-

cles in use on board, formed a very complete assortment of stores to draw upon. All vessels of the long voyage carry ample ship's stores in the matter of sails, cordage and the like to guard against unforeseen accidents.

The Northumberland having, after nearly three months, been thus brought piece by piece safely on shore, it was proposed to give the crew a few days for rest and recreation, a plan that Sir Robert and the pilot proposed, as they thought it would have a good effect upon the spirits of the men, who had really worked very hard since the day on which they anchored in the little land-locked bay of the lone island. And now they were to commence upon a fresh task, which, even with the utmost application, would require some four months to complete.

After all proper arrangements had been consummated, the keel of a sloop, designed to be of some two hundred tons burthen, was laid in due form, and all save four of the crew went earnestly to work upon it, under the guidance of the pilot and the carpenter of the Northumberland. The latter individual happening to be a man who thoroughly understood his business, became a personage of no small importance to the interests of all concerned.

Some of the crew in the mean time were employed under the direction of Sir Robert, in securing and preparing provisions for the rest; nor was this a slight task, since providing for the immediate consumption was but a part of it. Many days were passed in securing and curing deer's tongues and quarters, and in collecting some of the best turtle to be put on shipboard, with other prepared food for the voyage home. Sir Robert himself was most industrious in taming and fattening numerous fowls of different species, to be kept alive in coops on board the proposed vessel, to supply them with that rarity at sea, fresh provisions. And thus all went prosperously on, and each man exerted himself to the utmost to perform his duty and to push matters ahead.

In the mean time, Sir Robert and the pilot found the island which they had thus by chance discovered, to be some nine miles in circumference, and as pretty a spot as ever smiled beneath a tropical sun. It was not only profuse in vegetation and in the rarest and sweetest of wild flowers, but its almost boundless supply of fres provisions was of incalculable importance to Sir Robert and his party. Though they were amply supplied with fire arms, yet a gun had not been discharged since they landed on the island, for there was neither animal nor bird there that might not be secured with the utmost ease, and slaughtered at will with the knife. Some half dozen goats were so easily tamed that they were petted and kept about the immediate vicinity of the camp, and taught to afford their milk for the use of the officers and crew of the Northumberland, so that with their ample supply of coffee, their comfort was greatly enhanced as it regarded the matter of the palate.

"It wants but one blessing to make this island a perfect paradise," said the pilot.

"And that is—"

"The society of woman, Sir Robert; with a loved companion, I could dwell here forever."

"You are romantic, Mr. Pilot," said Sir Robert, smiling.

"It is an humble wish, and I've dreamed of it many a night since we have been here."

And thus it did really seem to the pilot and many of the crew also, for the beautiful island appeared to produce spontaneously nearly all that men could need for food. And many was the sigh those honest hearts uttered for those they had left at home, that they could not there together enjoy such richness of climate, such delicious fruits, and such loveliness as surrounded them on all sides.

Gathered about the entrance of their tents, upon the soft green sward, the seamen would smoke their pipes and spin those yarns and sea stories that form the charm of the forecastle. Some were of the actual experience of these rovers of the deep, and some were re-told from other lips. A bold adventurous vein generally pervaded them, though they rarely ended without a love plot, for seamen are proverbially gallant.

It was a wild scene that the crew thus almost nightly presented, and Sir Robert and the pilot, whose tents were a short distance from the rest, which they overlooked, sometimes stole down to within ear-shot to listen, for diversion's sake, to some of these nautical yarns; nor were they without interest even to them, now thrown so completely upon their own resources for amusement.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SAILOR'S YARN.

Cease, rude Boreas, blustering railer!
List, ye landsmen, all to me;
Messmates, hear a brother sailor
Sing the dangers of the sea. STEVENS.

A ROUGH and hearty set of men were they that were left of the Northumberland's crew. They were gathered now as we have described, before their tents in a social knot, when Jack Spencer, a sort of spokesman among them, and the same Jack who was helmsman when the pilot first discovered the island, spoke up:

"Well, messmates," said he, "I shouldn't mind about bein' cast away once in a while, if so be I might fall in with Bill Jenks's luck."

"What was that, Jack?" said a half-dozen voices in a single breath.

"O, bother it!" replied Jack Spencer, cramming a large quid of tobacco in his cheek, and looking a little annoyed at the query; "I d'n know. The yarn has been stowed away so long, that I'm blasted if I can get hold of it just now. But wait a bit, and p'raps I'll get an end out."

"Heave ahead, my hearty," said one at his elbow, "reel it off."

"Yes, pay out, old fellow," chimed in a half-dozen of his messmates.

Jack paused for a moment, and thrust his hand under his tarpaulin as if he had suddenly discovered the location of the missing yarn, then settling himself comfortably he began:

"You see now, messmates, though I'd be a bit puzzled to overhaul the story, it's not I that would ever forget Bill Jenks; no, nor you either if ye'd ever seen him. He *was* a sailor; none of your fresh water shark or land crab about him; he was a true-blue every inch of him, and no mistake, and as fancy a chap too as ever I clapped eyes on; figure-head, cutwater, plank-shear and all. Well, d'ye see, I knowed him in old Portsmouth, and the women all said there was never a prettier blue jacket stopped ashore, than Bill Jenks. Ay, he was a whole-hearted sailor, stem and stern."

"Belay that," said a rough tar opposite to Jack Spencer, "you've got your craft full-rigged, why don't you launch it and stand out into deep water?"

"Ay, ay. Well, d'ye see, it was this way with Bill Jenks. It was when he was livin' ashore at Portsmouth, with plenty of prize money aboard and all fair weather aloft, he had made up to get spliced to a neat little craft that he'd in tow for the matter of a year

or two, and then to take a shop and settle down for life on shore. Well, d'ye see, just as the day was fixed and all the tackle was got ready to histe 'em right into matrimony, what does the gal do but let fly her sheets and run off afore the wind with a flash sargent or cop'ral, or some of these under officers among the sogers! Savin' one on 'em, I used to know, I wish all red coats to the bottom.

"Well, d'ye see, poor Bill was mighty like our old ship when she heaved too, and went over spank on her beam-ends; it a'most capsized him. Well, the long and the short of it was, that he gave away his prize money to his old mother and a sister that he had, and shipped agin. He went aboard the first ship that took his eye, without so much as asking where bound or what sarvice; but it turned out that the ship was a Canton trader, and glad enough were they, I warrant ye, when they found out the val'y of Bill Jenks, for he know'd everything about a ship from stem to starn-post, and from keel to main-truck; he'd slept in a hammock from a boy.

"As for the captain of the ship, he was an owner's son, put in with a mate to nuss him and whisper into his ear what to say, when he walked the quarter deck; howsomever, all wonld have gone well enough, only by-and-by the youngster got to know just enough to make him foolish and pig-witted. So one dark night in the Pacific, when it was blowin' big guns, the young captain as would be, plumped the ship chuck on a reef near the Friendly Isles. In course, she went to pieces right off, and not a soul was saved from the wreck, except Bill and the second mate.—They were carried by a serge upon the reef, where they crawled upon a high point, beyond the reach of the furious and boilin' waves.

"Well, they passed a dismal night you may believe; bu when daylight come again, they saw not more than a hundred yards within the reef, a beautiful little island, as green as a gen'lman's park, with cocoanuts and other fruits that Bill didn't know anything about, and a mazin' sight like this little bit of an isle that we're on now, messmates, which I hold to be an uncommon blessin' to us, seein' as we had laid our course for Davy Jones' locker, and were suddinly brought up here all standin'!

"Bill and the mate swam over the little patch of water, and spying all about, they discovered that there wasn't a soul on the island besides themselves, which pleased them mightily, for you know them islanders are many of them cannibals, and make nothin' of roastin' a feller without sauce. They saw, howsomever, the shore of another island off to the nor'ard three leagues or so, but didn't have much fear of having a visit from the inhabitants, who you know have no crafts larger than their paddle canoes. Well, when they come to build themselves a snuggery, they minded to put it as much out of sight as might be, and be handy to the beach, and give 'em a chance to keep a bright look-out for any craft that might be passing the island.

"So, d'ye see, they fixed up a little place among the trees against the side of a hill, and got everything ship-shape as might be, considerin' their outfit, and then they lived like officers in a cabin, independent as lords. Bill said there was only one thing wantin', and that was, he miss'd havin' no hammock to turn into when it was his watch below, and then again when he came to think of his old mother and Portsmouth, it used to bring him a little aback. But, 'cept these, Bill and the mate was gay as a pleasure yacht, spinnin' yarns and eatin' yams and cocoanuts. Howsomever, tain't allers calm wether, and they soon got into rough water.

"One day, a lot of the savages come over from the other island and landed, before Bill or the mate know'd anything about it, for they'd got careless and didn't keep watch as they they'd ought to done. As soon as they see'd the savages, they clapped on all sail and run for their anchorage and got the hatches down. But the savages got a wink at a foot print in the sand, or su'thin' of the sort, and they were wide awake, I tell ye.

☞ *The second number of this work will be published and for sale Saturday April 27.*

THE MISTAKE OF A LIFE-TIME.

CHAPTER VI.—[CONTINUED.]

"Savages arn't fools, and they know'd quick enough that the signs show'd somebody else besides their own people had been stan'-in' off and on there lately, By follerin' in their wake, they soon overhauled 'em, and brought up all stan'in' afore their snuggery.

"If Bill had only had two or three muskets, and some of the right sort o' stuff to put in 'em, he'd a given 'em a broadside that would have made 'em shear off and haul their wind, but as it was, the thing couldn't be helped.—He and the mate fit hard, but 'twasn't no use. The mate was killed dead as a hammer, and Bill was floored at last by a blow twixt wind and water, which nearly bilged him. But, I tell ye, mor'n one of them heathens bit dust afore *that* came to pass. So they plundered the cabin, and put Bill into one of their canoes and off they steered for home, yellin' and singin' like a squall in the riggin' of a seventy-four.

"When they came to land again and lifted Bill out, he fell into a swoond, for he was terribly wounded, and hadn't so much life in him as a drown'd cat. When he came to, he was layin' on some mats in the corner of one of their houses, and a girl was kneelin' by his side fannin' of him. She was a savage too, d'ye see, but for all that when Bill waked up and saw her handsome face a-watchin' of him, and looking so pitiful-like, he thought to himself that if all the savages were to look like her, they'd be very decent lookin' sort o' chaps after all. So when Bill had taken an observation, said he:

"'Sarv'nt, ma'am.'

"Bill, d'ye see, was always perlite, bein's he was brought up in a real gen'lman's house, where his mother was a kind of officer; they call it house-skipper, I believe, though I don't understand these land matters. It didn't take him long to find out that she didn't know a word of English, and so he tried to lift himself and make a bow, ship-shape, but, lord love ye! he couldn't no more start himself than I could hist in the ship's anchor alone. Then the pretty one she shook her head and pressed her little hand on his forehead; and, my stars! Bill couldn't have understood better if she'd told him with her own mouth, to lie still and be quiet and go to sleep. So, d'ye see, Bill clos'd his eyes and made b'lieve to obey orders, and then he'd open 'em a bit and take an observation on the sly, and as the girl still knelt by him fannin' of him and coolin' the fever of his wounds, Bill thought she might have been an angel; only angels, you know, don't have that sort of complexion. And then—"

"Avast there, Jack," interrupted he who had before spoken, "can't you heave ahead?"

"Well," said Jack, rolling over the big quid in his mouth, so as to deposit it in the opposite cheek from where it had been coiled up, "I s'pose I do steer a little wild, but, lord love

you, messmates, there's time enough here on this sweet bit of land. But I'll haul aft the sheet and trim up to my course.

"Well, d'ye see, the pretty Fedi watched over Bill and gave him water and took care of him till he was almost dead in love with her sweet face, until at last he 'bout forgot his old sweetheart and Portsmouth troubles. But all this time, Bill see'd these cantankerous heathens skulkin' about and takin' a look at him once in a while, as if to see when he'd be fit to be cooked. Bill didn't like that zackly, and so at last he made signs to Fedi, pointin' to one of the savages that came trampin' along, and then puttin' his finger to his mouth and pointin' to himself again, as much as to say:

"'Fedi, are your messmates going to eat me when I get launched again?'

"But the pretty girl seemed so taken aback, and she looked so frightened and flustered like, with big tears in her eyes, that Bill gave it up and asked no more questions. 'Anyhow," said he to himself, 'if I *must* be roasted or biled, I hope little Fedi will be head-cook. She'd do it so neatly and nice fashion-like—'twould almost be a comfort.'"

"That's all gammon, *that* 'ere," growled a hoarse voice by his side.

"Well, I don't care, messmate," apologized Jack Spencer, "I know Bill Jenks felt so just then. But, don't bother me, or else I'll lose the slack of it altogether. Well, d'ye see, in a few days Bill got so as to move about, and Fedi kept as close by him as though she had been set to keep guard over him. By-and-by there was a great gatherin' near the chief's house, for you must know it was at the head-chief's or king's house that Bill was confined, and this Fedi was his daughter.

"Fedi looked frightened and troubled, and all of a sud'n some of the savages came and took Bill and carried him out to a place where they had made a ring of stones and kindled a great fire. Well, in course, Bill made up his mind that now they were goin' to cook and eat him, for sure; but he was so weak he couldn't show fight no mor'n a child, so he thought he'd take it as cool as he could, considerin' the fire. Pretty soon out stepped two butcher looking chaps, with sharp pointed stones, and Bill began to brace himself up to die with a stout heart and man fashion. For, d'ye see, messmates, he'd never wronged anybody, and hoped to make a good end ov't, as though he'd never been Jack in the forecastle, 'mongst foul words and foul weather.

"Just then, when he thought all was over, he felt two little arms clasping him about, and heard Fedi cryin', and threatenin', and beseechin', and all the while keepin' her little tongue goin' like a fog bell in the channel.—Then a big chief, whose brother it seems had been killed in the fight on the other island by Bill, rushed into the circle with his war-club to kill him. Then Fedi screamed and placed herself right athwart Bill's body, and at once the chief fell dead by a blow given by the head-chief himself, Fedi's father. Then the head-chief stepped inside the circle, and commenced a great palaver, which Bill didn't understand a word of at the time, though he afterwards larnt that he told the other savages that Bill was a *wah-woo*, that is, a smart man, one who know'd a great deal, and could help 'em in war and make wepons for 'em, and show 'em how to build fine houses and big canoes.

"D'ye see, the reason was, Finow, the old king, had no other daughter than Fedi, and set everything by her; and she bein' so determined Bill shouldn't be killed, why he gave in to her, and bein' a cunnin' old chap, tried to make the best of it with his messmates.—The savages then led Bill off to the beach and put him into a canoe, and rowed him over to a place where there was a low, dark bildin'; with posts carved with idols and grinnin' faces, and locked him up. Bill lay all night on a mat in one corner, feelin' dull enough, you may depend, for he'd no sort of idea what they was goin' to do with him. As for bein' kept prisoner, or powder-monkey, or bottle-washer, or deck-swabber to the tarnal heathens, there was no satisfaction in that, and he'd as liefs be roasted and eaten up at once; and yet somehow he hoped to live for Fedi's sake, and to have a chance to thank her for havin' done so much for him.

"Well, by-and-by, Bill fell fast asleep, and in the first mornin' watch, come them same heathens again, with a great noise and pow-wow, and took Bill and put him into a canoe and rowed him back again to the big island. They carried him to King Finow's house once more, and as he come towards the place, he met the king and Fedi, who looked to him

more beautiful than ever. Well, the king he took Bill's hand and placed his daughter's in it, and a priest waved a grinnin' wooden idol over them, and Bill was made to understand that Fedi was his wife! and that he would soon be made a sort of chief skipper of the king's canoes or something of the sort.

"So, d'ye see, Bill on the whole was mighty well satisfied. He and Fedi lived together as happy as may be; she teachin' him to talk Tonga, and he tellin' her all about old England. Well, Bill got to be a great man on the island, for he show'd the natives a great many things they never dreamt of afore, but it wasn't very long before he began to feel a little uneasy, thinkin' how much he'd like to see old Portsmouth once more, and at least get a word to his old mother that he was such a great chief and married a king's daughter, and then he wanted to send home somethin' by way of remembrance like, nothin' more 'n natural.

"Well, Fedi got some suspicion of this and come to him one day cryin', and tellin' him that she knew he meant to leave her the first chance, and go off to his own people across the ocean. Bill was fairly flustered, for he loved Fedi very much; and she took on so hard that fin'lly he made a clean breast on't, and told her all about it, and how he wanted to see his old mother and his own country, and that when he had done this he'd come back to Tonga again, and he wanted Fedi to go with him in the big ship that walked the water and talked thunder.

"'I'll go anywhere with you,' says Fedi; and so she would, for she loved him 'mazingly.

"At last an English tradin' ship cast anchor off Tonga, and Bill persuaded Fedi to keep matters to herself and go secretly on board the big ship with him, promising to bring her back again after a while to her father. But the trouble was to go on board without the natives knowin' of it, for they wouldn't let Bill go at any rate if they could help it, he was too useful. Besides, King Finow wouldn't have run the risk of his daughter's bein' lost altogether, and never seein' her again. But Fedi bl'eved every word Bill told her, just as if 'twas gospel, 'caus Bill never told her no lies.

"Well, d'ye see, Bill and Fedi got aboard the ship by a trick of their own, and when the king and the rest of the savages found it out, there was a regular catawalapin', I tell ye, and King Finow come alongside to have a talk with Bill and get him and Fedi ashore; so the upshot of it was that Bill talked to him like a parly'ment, and told him he would certainly come back from England and bring him a dozen new hatchets for a present, and other things, and that he was only goin' to make his own folks a visit. So Bill pacified the whole mess, and then parted as grig as a middy just got his warrant. Well, the islanders put lots of stuff aboard, sandal wood and curiosities, besides yams and lots o' shore truck and vegetables, and off went Bill and Fedi for old England.

"Well, when they got to Portsmouth Bill's story was spread about and made a great noise. By-and-by it got to the ears of some of the great lords of London, and from them to the king and queen, and nothin' would do but Bill and Fedi must come up to London and make a visit to the court and nobility. In course they couldn't do elsewise than obey orders, and Bill hadn't no objections neither, for by this time he'd got Fedi quite ship-shape, and in English trim, and as she was wide awake as a lark and quick to larn, she know'd how to behave herself as pretty as any of the great madams. So off they went to Windsor castle, with a lord to show 'em the way, and pilot 'em round.

"When they got there, d'ye see, there was the king and queen, and all the great nobility; and Bill was asked to tell his 'ventures, and he pleased 'em mightily. But what they most took a shine to, was Fedi, and they crowded round and asked her lots o' questions, which she answered in such nice little odd parley-vous, that they was all delighted with her. Bill he'rd 'em say to each other that she was reg-'lar 'andsome, and not a bit savage-like, that she looked a great deal like one of them dark Spaniard girls that they talk so much about; Bill said he thought they'd hit it pretty near, and if Fedi wasn't a real beauty, then he'd never seed anybody that was, and for roy'l blood why she was chuck full of it.

"Howsomever, they had a grand time of it, and the queen made Fedi lots of rich presents, and even took a splendid ring off her finger and put it on Fedi's, when they parted, to remember her by."

"Well," interrupted a foremast hand oppo-

site to Jack Spencer, "Bill Jenks couldn't have been such a created fool as to let his wife take him off to the Friendlies again when he'd got under the lee of such comforts as you tell on about home."

"Of course he couldn't," said one or two.

"By no sort of means," said another.

"He had the law all in his own hands," said another.

"He might have made a fortune showin' his pretty wife as one of the natives of the Friendlies," continued the old sea dog who spoke first.

"But how was it, Jack?" asked another who had not before spoken. "Did Bill Jenks make a cattle-show of his wife?"

"That's the question," chimed in the rest of the men, laughing at the idea.

"Avast there, messmate," cried Jack Spencer, somewhat excited at this remark. "Bill wasn't a chap to sail under false colors; and he did by Fedi just as he had promised he would. So when the people found Bill was going out again, they had a talk about it and finally the king sent him a warrant makin' him gov'nor of the island, though Bill said that he never meant to interfere with King Finow, for he was his father, and should have his say about everything as long as he lived."

"Wall, that was 'andsome in him, anyhow, seein' as how he might 'er superceded the old chap if he'd like ter done it—eh, messmates?"

"To be sure it was," said several of the listeners at once.

"There wasn't none of your niggardly land shark about him," said Jack Spencer.

"Never a bit of it," said they all, joining heartily.

"But Jack, you're not agoin' to bring up with a short hitch in that 'ere fashion, are yer?"

"Ay, he's missed stays," said one close by his side.

"Shivers in the wind," suggested another, emblematically.

"Has let go his anchor where there's no bottom," said a third.

"Brace sharp up, Jack, and lay her head to the wind again."

"Avast a bit, messmates, and I'll gather away once more."

"Belay that, messmates," said a rough old tar who had been listening quietly; "give Jack the helm, and let him manage his own craft."

"Ay, ay," chimed in the rest, tired of hearing all hands talking.

"As to the matter of missing stays," said Jack Spencer, not exactly satisfied at the turn the conversation had taken, "I deny that altogether, and should have made a clean tack of it, hadn't Ben Bower stood athwart my horse in such a lubberly fashion."

"All right, all right, Jack."

"Go ahead, go ahead."

"Pay out, pay out."

And such like cries encouraged Jack to go on and conclude his story.

"Well, d'ye see, Bill was put aboard one of the gov'mt cruisers, and plenty of muskets and ammunition were given to him, and a missionary parson was sent out with them to preachify to the savages, and help make 'em civilized like. When Bill and Fedi landed at Tonga again, there was a great jubilee, and he was made second king on the spot, and governs there now, so I heard when I was last in Portsmouth. Anyhow I mean to go there one of these days, providin' we reach England again, and be made adm'ral or post-captain, or somethin' of the kind, for Bill Jenks wasn't never the chap to forget an old messmate."

"Look a here," said Ben Bower, "couldn't ye take a chap long with ye?"

"No, shiver my timbers if I would take you after you come down on me in that style."

"No offence, Jack Spencer," said his messmate; "I was only looking out ahead, that's all."

"Square the yards and be friends again," said two or three at once.

"With all my heart," said Ben Bower. "Jack give us your honest fives."

"There they are, messmate," said Jack.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PILOT'S STORY.

Did I tremble? Ah then 'twas not from fear
That I did shake, but from saddest memory. OLD PLAY.

SIR ROBERT and the pilot puffed out the last whiffs of their cheroots, as Jack Spencer finished his yarn, and walked away unobserved by the crew, who had been listening with that absorbed attention that seamen always accord to romance or a record of strange adventure, from whatever source.

"A pretty forecastle story," said the pilot, "and told in true sailor fashion."

"Not so badly put together for a simple seaman, either," said Sir Robert.

In this way the spare moments of the wrecked party were passed on the island, while day by day they pressed forward with the utmost industry the building of the little vessel that they hoped would carry them safe to their native land. There were no drones in the hive, every man bent his full strength to the object, for it became common interest, and was alike for the good of each one employed. More than that, the work was better done as well as faster, inasmuch as those parts that under ordinary circumstances might have been slighted, being prepared and fitted by interested hands, were sure to be well done in every respect.

On the southern part of the island in a little valley that was so petite and perfect in its picturesque beauty as to appear almost artificial, and through which meandered a little miniature river, over which an agile man might easily leap, Sir Robert found a prize. It was a cluster of emeralds of such rare size and purity as to be almost as valuable as diamonds. This discovery induced further research, and Sir Robert and the pilot found the bed of this fairy-like stream to abound in these precious stones, besides discovering also now and then a very brilliant diamond. Many leisure hours were passed by them in quietly securing a portion of these rich stones, and of course all thediamonds that they could find.

It was not deemed prudent that the crew should know of this discovery, and therefore these researches were conducted in secret until both had secured two little leathern bags, one of emeralds and the other of diamonds in the rough state, enough to make a fortune in England for any one man. In Sir Robert's case this was a matter comparatively unimportant; but with the pilot it was quite another affair, as he would otherwise have landed, should they ever reach England, without a penny in his pocket, and thus be dependent upon others for the means of subsistence. As it was, he felt himself to be quite his own master, and independent of even Sir Robert's kind liberality.

In one of their excursions to the emerald valley, a strange and somewhat startling cir-

cumstance occurred. Sir Robert and the pilot were searching for precious stones, together, when they heard a rustling sound of a peculiar character near by them, and a most strange hissing that they could not understand, but still they kept on at their employment, though pausing every now and then to wonder at the repetition of the strange sounds. This was continued for nearly an hour, until just as they were preparing to leave the valley for their encampment, Sir Robert heard the pilot cry out with a voice of horror, and saw him fall senseless to the earth. In the next instant he discovered at some ten yards distant, the body of a large snake, of some ten feet in length, which with head erect and curling tail, was gazing full at them both.

Sir Robert's first impulse was to attack it with a heavy stick that he walked with, for he had no weapons about him; but the creature in a moment glided silently away towards the foot of the valley, and Sir Robert turned his attention to his companion. His first fear was that the snake might have stung or bitten him, and thus poisoned the pilot, but on examination he could find no signs of this upon his person, and it was some time before Sir Robert could revive his companion from the swoon into which he had fallen, sufficiently to enable him to speak. He was astonished that the sight of a serpent or indeed anything else, should have so affected a brave man as this had done. It puzzled him to think that one so full of courage and daring, should have fainted like a woman at such a comparative trifle.

At last the pilot drew a long breath, and with a shudder raised himself upon his arm, and in a moment, after looking wildly about him, he arose to his feet, but on his eyes resting upon Sir Robert, he leaned upon his shoulder, as he said:

"Excuse this strange emotion, but it is beyond my power to control."

"You are not harmed, I trust," said Sir Robert, anxiously.

"O, no, physically I am as well as ever," said the pilot, sighing.

"What then has affected you so strangely, are you really sick?"

"Spare me, another time, in some other place—but let us away from here."

"With all my heart; here, lean on me, I'm as stout as a mule."

"No, no, Sir Robert. I am quiet myself now; it was only mental excitement," said the pilot.

"Queer," said Sir Robert to himself. "Come, have you got your emeralds?"

"Yes."

"It will hardly pay to come this way again, they are getting so scarce, and our collection is ample."

"True, we will not come here again," said the pilot, hurrying his steps out of the valley.

It was in the after part of the day that this scene had occurred, and on arriving at the encampment, the pilot excusing himself to Sir Robert, retired, nor was he seen until the following morning.

"I know," said he to Sir Robert, on their meeting the next day, "that my conduct must have seemed very singular yesterday, and I owe you who have been so frank and friendly with me, an explanation."

"I was not a little surprised," replied Sir Robert, frankly, "at the occurrence in the valley."

"To explain all to you, I must tell you my past history and that of my family," said the pilot; "and to-night if agreeable, I will do so; then you will no longer wonder at what you witnessed yesterday."

"I have been on the point of inquiring more minutely into your history before now," said Sir Robert, "but the present excitement of the hour has always prevented me from doing so."

Sir Robert had at the outset learned that the pilot, having lost his parents while yet quite young, had been sent to sea at his own request by those who had him in charge, and that having been well educated up to the time of his going to sea, and also entering on ship board under most favorable auspicies for promotion and obtaining a good knowledge of a seaman's duty, he improved very fast. He had already been in command of a large vessel. At the time that he came on board of the Northumberland as pilot in the Bay of Bengal, he was serving a year's apprenticeship as pilot, preparatory to taking command of one of the large East India packet ships that belonged to the East India Company, a most responsible and lucrative commission.

This general idea alone was all that Sir Robert knew of his young but well tried com-

panion and his history. As they met in the evening to smoke together before their tent door, Sir Robert said:

"Shall we hear that story now?"

"Yes," said the pilot, "I had prepared to tell you my history this evening."

Throwing themselves upon the soft green sward before the tent, and beneath a sky that was as clear and bright in its beautiful star-lit vault as the prophet's paradise, the pilot began:

"My father was educated in England, his native land, for the army, and after serving for some years in the infantry's service, and rising to a colonelcy by gradual promotion, he had the good fortune to distinguish himself in active service, for which he was made a general, and soon after entered in that capacity into the East India Company's service. India proved to be just the spot for the exercise of his talent and spirit, and he was soon made Governor of the district of Yazo, including the larger portions of the British India possessions. He married a high-born lady in Calcutta, and in his domestic relations I have reason to know, was most happy and contented. I was born in the second year of their union, and being an only child, was petted, humored and loved with all the affection of a kind mother and father. Time rolled on until I was nearly twelve years of age, during which period I had received every advantage in instruction that a child of that age could improve.

"My father's duty often called him inland, in the way of supervision of the forts, and other matters of the government, and on such journeys my mother often accompanied him, being absent for weeks at a time. On these occasions he would lodge for the time being in the huts of the natives, with whom my mother was a great favorite. I remember well of their starting on one of their tours together; it is as fresh in my memory as though it were but yesterday that it took place. After a short absence, my father found himself a little separated from his escorting party in the jungle, and overtaken by night, stopped at a native hut where he proposed to tarry until morning. They were hospitably entertained, and slept soundly throughout that night, but when the door was opened by my father in the morning, the first thing that met his eyes was the body of an immense anaconda coiled within a few yards of the entrance, evidently in watch of the first being that should come out of the hut, thus to satiate the ravenous appetite that it is so well known to possess."

Sir Robert recalled to his mind the serpent they had seen in the emerald valley, but said nothing.

"My father," continued the pilot, "shut the door as quickly as possible and secured it, not however until he had inhaled the pestilential breath of the foul animal, so near did it dart its head to his face! He staggered back and fell down, for a moment overcome by the malaria of the serpent's breath, which the inhabitants of the jungle say produces a sure but lingering death by its poisonous properties. In the hut there were only my mother, himself, and a native. The latter knowing but too well the nature and character of the snake, could not be persuaded to attempt any mode of escape, stoutly declaring that nothing should induce him to leave the hut until the anaconda had appeased his gluttonous appetite, and still more, to my mother's dismay and alarm, declared that he had lost his only child by one who crushed and swallowed it, not more than a year before.

"Their only hope was that some animal passing that way might attract the snake and tempt his appetite, though the native said they scented human flesh a great way off, and when this was the case, would eat no other, unless very hungry. It was also a fact that they were well aware of, that most animals of the jungle could scent the reptile itself, and their instinct led them to keep out of his way. Even the lion flees his presence, for his wonderful capacity and appetite enables him to swallow this formidable animal whole, after having crushed the body and bones by the irresistible power of its fearful folds and coils, as strong as a ship's cable.

"In this terrible situation, nearly starved for want of even the meanest food, as well a being under the most intense excitement of mind, those within the hut became at last almost distracted, while the serpent, with never sleeping eyes, lay coiled there in a way to command all parts of the small circular cabin, lifting its flat and ugly head at every sound that was made by the sufferers, and now and then darting out its forked tongue with increas-

ing appetite as it scented afresh those within the cabin.

"All their consultations and plans were of no avail—they were imprisoned beyond release. Their terrible enemy would not have given ground before a whole body of cavalry, but would have stricken down its victim, and as it never retreats, would die crushing its assailants to death in its iron folds. My father fully realized this; indeed he was no stranger, having been so long in India, to the character of the enemy he had to deal with. He knew that unless its appetite was appeased, the animal would not leave its post so long as they remained within. But calming my mother's fears as well as he was able, he paced the narrow limits of the cabin and hoped for the best, and that some chance succor might come to their aid, to relieve them from their fearful situation.

"My father's only weapons were a gun, a pair of heavy pistols, and his sword. The latter was a sharp and trusty weapon that he had often wielded in battle. At last driven to despair, he resolved in this extremity to sally out and give battle to the snake, for he declared to my mother that death was fast coming upon them all in the shape of famine, and that by the sacrifice of himself, he could save her life at least, while there still remained a chance that he might possibly escape death in the proposed conflict with the terrible and pestilential creature. All her entreaties for him to give up this purpose and to still remain within the cabin, were useless. He had become desperate, and finally on the fourth morning, arming himself with his drawn sword and loosening his pistols in his belt, he ordered the native to throw open the door and to shut it quickly behind him again—and thus he passed out to this strange conflict.

"Those within the cabin could observe him through the crevices, and from these they watched with fearful interest; the native with the most intense excitement, and my mother almost crazed with fear for her husband's safety."

"What a fearful situation," exclaimed Sir Robert, deeply interested in the relation.

"It was indeed awful!" said the pilot.

"It was, but go on."

"I will."

"My father knew the nature of the snake," continued the pilot, "that its first movement was to strike with its tail, and then with the utmost rapidity to wind itself about its victim, and thus finally to crush it to death. The moment therefore that he found himself outside the cabin door, he fixed his eyes upon the serpent's tail, and as it was quickly raised to strike him, he managed to meet it with the keen edge of his sword, which half severed three feet off the length of the body. Nothing daunted by this, the serpent only drew back to renew the attack once more, and prepared to wind about its victim, and this time foiling my father's weapon, struck him to the ground.

"In an instant the serpent commenced to coil its slimy body about its now prostrate victim; but my father's presence of mind did not for a moment desert him. He remembered that if he was to die it was to save his beloved wife, and he resolved to sell his life as dearly as possible. As he felt himself thus partially overcome, he brought his sword to his side, *with the edge outward*, and as the snake tightened its folds, it of course cut deeper and deeper into its own body, causing it, in spite of its furious haste to appease its voracious hunger, partially to uncoil itself from the person of its victim, though only to prepare for a renewal of its bonds.

"In vain were my mother's efforts to get the native to go to his assistance, and failing in this, she soon after fainted from exhaustion and fear—while the native still peered through the crevice, at the strange contest.

"My father's arms were thus partially relieved for a moment, and in this brief space of time, he employed himself in loosening and cocking one of his pistols, though he had scarcely time to effect this; and when the animal again drew close about him, he placed the muzzle against his body and fired! The shock was for a moment most decisive, and the snake quite unloosed itself from its victim to writhe in pain, and though my father was almost exhausted by the blows and pressure he had received, yet he once more resolutely attacked the enraged animal with his sword, wounding it freely at every stroke.

"The snake suffering from these numerous and severe wounds, and especially from the more efficacious one of the pistol shot, the ball of which passed quite through his body, performed the most fearful contortions, evincing

tokens of acute suffering. In consequence of these wounds, its movements became more slow and measured, its body no longer moving with that remarkable activity that characterizes its species, and yet its strange ungovernable appetite seemed to urge it on to a further attack upon my father. This time it came on head foremost, for its tail was now too severely wounded to strike with, and indeed it dragged like a dead weight after the other part of the body. As its forked tongue nearly reached my father's face, he levelled his remaining pistol and fired the entire charge into its very mouth!"

"That must have killed it, surely," said Sir Robert, who had risen to his feet with excitement at the story.

"It did, indeed," said the pilot. "The snake dropped in an instant after the shot took effect, and in a thousand fearful contortions it breathed its last!

"My mother said that she observed the fearful creature in its death struggle, and that its keen eyes, though peering out of its shattered head, seemed to her as almost human, and that they spoke as plainly as expression could speak, of revenge, hate and exultation in death. The body twisted and turned again and again, its thick slimy folds embracing each other, and when seemingly tied in a close, strong knot, it would unloose itself and straighten out to its full length, and lay thus trembling, as though shaken by the ground on which it lay. Then the scaly and dull hue of its body seemed to become chameleon-like and changed colors, now blue, now golden, and now almost white. She seemed to be almost fascinated by the revolting sight, and could find no power to turn away, but gazed at it still, in spite of the suffering of her husband. And thus strangely was the boor who kept the cottage also moved; the charm seemed more strange upon him, and he gazed upon the dying snake like one entranced.

"At last it uttered a moan almost like the human voice, and unrolling its coils, drew itself forward a few feet from where it had lain in these painful contortions, raised its head to let it fall heavily to the ground, trembled all over for a moment, and lay at last dead and motionless. The sight had strangely affected the native, whose physical debility from the want of food had doubtless affected his mind, as had also a consciousness of the cowardly part that he had enacted in permitting my father to attack the monster alone, and when convinced that the snake was absolutely dead, he turned for a moment one look upon his hut in the jungle, and then with a wild scream dashed away with the speed of the wind. He was never heard of again!"

"What a terrible situation and experience this must have been for your father."

"It was terrible, indeed, beyond my power of description," he answered.

"It was a most happy deliverance though," said Sir Robert, with a long breath; for he had followed the eloquent delivery of the pilot in every word, and had been much excited by it, as we have already mentioned.

"A happy delivery," repeated the pilot, "but a fatal encounter."

"Fatal?"

"Yes."

"How do you mean it was fatal? your father killed the snake."

"True, but—"

"What?"

"It was doubly fatal, nevertheless," replied the pilot, sadly.

"And your father, after the conflict—"

"Dragged himself into the cabin," said the pilot, sadly, "to die!"

"Alas! after so much bravery, so much manly effort," said Sir Robert.

Both remained silent for a moment, when Sir Robert said:

"And your mother: what of her?"

"She lived to reach Calcutta, but the pestilential breath she had inhaled, the suffering both in body and mind she had endured, laid her beside my father within the month.

"Since that day when my mother told me this scene until yesterday, I have never seen a snake. Do you wonder then that the sight should so have affected me as it did in the emerald valley?"

"Not I."

"And you do not think that my emotion was unmanly?"

"By no means," said Sir Robert. "It was but natural, after the fearful visitation that had made you an orphan."

The pilot made no reply, for the relation of the story had affected him much, but he pressed Sir Robert's hand warmly.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FREEBOOTER.

The great contention of the sea and skies
Parted our fellowship :—But, hark! a sail. CASSIO.

SIR ROBERT was much moved by the singular and interesting story of the pilot. The dangers which they had so lately shared together rendered them warm friends, and Sir Robert told him cordially that if he would come with him to England with the purpose of making it his future home, he might do so as his *son*, and that he would in all ways provide for him the same as though this relationship were cemented by the ties of blood. In the matter of his pecuniary means, their united discovery, as we have said, had given to either sufficient to produce an independence, if it could once be safely deposited in any portion of the civilized world. Delighted at the noble disposition and character of his new friend, the pilot cheerfully agreed to this proposition.

"I have no relations in India, Sir Robert, and therefore no particular reason for returning thither. We have been together long enough to know each other well, and my good fortune here has given me the means of independence should we succeed in reaching England, and therefore I accept with pleasure your offer of adoption, and I shall take both pride and joy in looking towards you as a father."

"Well spoken, my brave boy," said Sir Robert, who really loved the pilot for his many fine characteristics. "Well spoken, and I doubt not we shall get on favorably together. So from this hour you are my son."

"With all my heart, Sir Robert."

"I am a peculiar man," said Sir Robert, "such an one as nine-tenths of the world despise, I presume, for I equally despise just about that proportion myself."

"You have been unfortunate, perhaps, and have thus been rendered in your feelings a little misanthropic; but I can count a mass of good qualities in you, sir, that a casual eye even, might see."

"Don't flatter me," said Sir Robert, with honest disgust; "I can't bear that."

"I meant what I said most honestly, and therefore said it bluntly—"

"I believe you, I believe you," said Sir Robert heartily, offering his hand.

"Thank you," said the pilot, pressing it warmly and sincerely.

"Well, now," said Sir Robert, to change the subject, "how comes on the new craft? She should be launched, according to our first calculation, during this month."

"True, the month is nearly up, but the hull

comes on famously; a gang of shipwrights with all their tools, could hardly have done better than these raw hands have done."

"How long before we shall be able to launch her, think you?"

"She'll be ready in a fortnight."

"Heaven grant that she may be able to carry us to good firm English ground, once more. I never look about me here but this speck of an island seems to be floating out to sea."

"It is fast anchored, sir, you may depend," said the pilot, laughing, "and will hardly fetch away from here short of a volcano, or an earthquake to help it move."

"Most likely, most likely," said Sir Robert; "but it is hard to divest one's imagination of such fancies when there is such an extent of blue waters. Let us go around to the craft."

"Very well, sir; you have not seen her for some days."

"What shall we call the craft? Some appropriate name—what shall it be?"

"The Northumberland, junior," suggested the pilot, after a few moments' thought.

"That's too long," said Sir Robert, counting the letters upon his fingers.

"It is rather long."

"Try again," said Sir Robert.

"Well," said the pilot, musing, "how do you like The Islander."

"Pretty good, but not just the thing," said Sir Robert, pausing to reflect for a moment, and then said: "What think you now of *The Substitute?* Short and pithy, eh? Easily called, and expressive."

"Good," said the pilot, repeating the name several times to himself, "very good."

"It tells half the story of our troubles at once; eh, Mr. Pilot?"

"A better name could not be possibly conceived," he answered.

"Then the Substitute it shall be," said Sir Robert, as they turned an angle of the hillside, and came in view of the busy crew employed upon the new craft.

The sloop had indeed progressed rapidly, and now, although scarcely six months had expired since they anchored the Northumberland in the little bay, it presented a most creditable completeness of hull and rigging. It was almost a miracle to realize that so trim and perfect a little vessel had grown up under those inexperienced hands in so short a period, and was an evidence of what industry and perseverance will accomplish. Of course, the men had worked at much disadvantage in many respects, but what they lacked in conveniences, they more than made up for in zeal. Besides which, they found much of the material which it was necessary for them to use, already prepared to their hands, inasmuch as it was applied to the same use and parts it had filled in the larger vessel, its dimensions only being so reduced as to correspond with the size and requisites of the new craft.

The whole number of souls saved from the fearful wreck of the first night after they had left port, numbered but fifteen, including Sir Robert and the pilot. It was calculated to arrange the Substitute so that she should afford ample and commodious accommodations for these, and also to carry sufficient provisions to serve them bountifully, even if their voyage to England should prove a long one.—The original provisions of the ship were nearly all exhausted, though such as could be kept had been preserved, as better suited for sea service than anything they could prepare on the island. But the place of those provisions, that generally form a ship's outfit, had been well supplied by the party that had been selected for that purpose. The sea bread, especially, became a great luxury, and was dealt out most sparingly, that some might be reserved for the coming voyage. But the crew hardly required or coveted it, having such abundance of fried plantains, kid's flesh and young deer, with turtle meat and many green vegetables, and already had they become adepts in making what has in modern times become so popular, turtle soup.

The mainmast of the ship served for the same purpose in the sloop, with much trimming and patient cutting down, while the Northumberland's bowsprit, with equal labor expended upon it, answered a like purpose on board the Substitute. As to sails, there were a plenty of spare ones, new and of the best sort, as well as ample ropes and cordage of all kinds ready to their very hands, taken from the supply that the ship had carried. So that, in fact, when with reiterated shouts of joy, they launched the Substitute, and she glided into the element that was to be her future home, she was in reality very well fitted and found in every respect, even for such a

voyage as Sir Robert and his companions contemplated to make in her across the ocean.

The ecstacy of the crew knew no bounds when the sloop was once finally afloat; they acted like children as they gazed upon the work of their own hands, and Jack Spencer declared, with a hitch at his pants, that:

"It is worth bein' cast away, anyhow, to see such a jolly sight as that!"

"My hies, how square she sits," cried a foremast hand, in raptures.

"With her draft a little abaft the beam," suggested the pilot, who stood among them, and who designed this point in the sloop, as one of no little beauty and utility in sailing.

"Yes, your honor," said the foremastman, "and just enough rake in her mast to match."

"She floats like a swan," said Sir Robert, with no less appreciation, but less nautical taste.

Nearly everything was launched in the sloop from the ways where she was built, and as she glided off, she was almost ready to hoist her mainsail and jib, and fill away on her course.

And now—how natural it was—that, when all was prepared, when the last boat came off from the shore and everything was on board, they should look back upon the friendly shelter they had so long enjoyed, this garden of the ocean, this oasis in the desert of waters, with silent, but sincere regret at the parting. Sir Robert was compelled to acknowledge to himself, that he felt very sad, and many of the rough tars dropped a tear on the forecastle, as they turned away from the solitary but friendly island. Even the kids and other animals came down to the shore, as the mainsail was set, seeming to wish them a hearty farewell, and the few goats, that had been domesticated about their immediate dwellings, now came together towards the shore, and bleated after those who had kindly fed and petted them so long!

"There is more true humanity there," said Sir Robert, pointing at the sight on the shore, as the pilot and himself stood upon the deck together, "than one often meets among human beings."

"It is a remarkable scene, indeed," said the young pilot, as the sails began slowly to fill, and the hull, feeling the impetus thus given, fell gracefully into her course to the northwest.

"Farewell," said Sir Robert, leaning over the taffrail, and gazing back, "thou hast been a friendly spot to us."

Remarkably fine weather accompanied the sloop on her course for many days, and fortune seemed to have taken them under her peculiar care and favor, until, according to their reckoning, the Substitute was some five days' sail from the English Channel. It was just nightfall, when the pilot gave the order to get in the sails, for his experienced eye foresaw heavy weather brewing, and the sun, which had gone down like a ball of fire, looked to the seamen's eye as if inflamed.

Hardly had everything been properly secured on board the Substitute, before the gale was upon them. It was with sorrowful faces that the crew saw the head of their craft turned to the west, before the gale, and noted the lightning-like speed with which she ploughed her course away from the homes they had hoped so soon to see. But it was their only hope, and thus they stood before the gale for several days, and it seemed to be sweeping them across the ocean. The sloop was most weatherly, but beyond control in such a gale as this, though all were safe, and they felt little fear of immediate danger, but sad enough when they realized how long it would require to gain once more this lost ground.

On the morning of the eighth day, the sun rose clear and bright, the storm was over, but alas! those on board the Substitute were thousands of miles from their native land. An observation soon showed them that they were in the latitude of St. Domingo, and indeed they made out one or two of the West India isles. This enabled them more correctly once more to lay their course, and, thankful for their deliverance from the gale, the canvass was again spread.

These were times when the honest trader scarcely dared to enter the low latitudes at all, or if he did so, every precaution was adopted to avoid meeting with the remorseless Freebooters, that then flooded the isles and channels of the Spanish Indies, as they were then called; and these seas were the theatre of the most bloody exploits that redden the pages of history. Though the pirates warred mainly against the Spaniards, to whose oppression they owed their origin, still they had become hardened by bloodshed and booty, and were

not scrupulous as to what flag a rich cargo sailed under.

In such times as these, and in such a locality as the Substitute was now in, it will not be wondered at that the pilot and Sir Robert felt not a little anxiety, when they discovered a sharp, rakish craft standing out from the gulf stream to the north of Cuba, near where they had found themselves on the storm's clearing up. The Substitute was rather a fast sailer, but she could not compete with the rover, for such his black flag at once bespoke him, and though by the superior manœuvres of the pilot much time was gained, yet the stranger neared them fast.

The arms on board the sloop were of no ordinary character. In those days, such a ship as the Northumberland did not sail without a heavy arm chest, and this, well stored with weapons and ammunition, had been carefully transported on board the sloop. It was very evident to Sir Robert and the pilot that a collision must take place between themselves and the rover, and, therefore, the arms were dealt out, giving to each man a boarding cutlass and a brace of pistols, besides to several who were known to be good shots, a gun each.

In the meantime, the pirate was overhauling them length after length; but, in order to gain time, the pilot had put the sloop before the wind, and thus the chase was a stern one, and gave the people of the Substitute ample time to prepare. Already were the two vessels sufficiently near to discern the people upon the decks of either. That of the rover was full, or nearly so, of blood-thirsty looking men, of all nations and appearances. On they came, until at last was heard a coarse hail across the intervening water, from the pirate's quarter deck.

"Heave to, or I'll fire into you!" growled a hoarse voice through a trumpet.

"We'll see," said Sir Robert, levelling a gun, and being an excellent shot, almost with the flash of his weapon the commander of the rover's craft, who had hailed them from the shrouds of his vessel, fell a corpse into the sea!

Doubly enraged at this, the pirates swung their craft alongside of the Substitute, grappled with her at the bows, and the two crafts, nearly of a size, swung round with the current together.

"Boarders away!" shouted a stern voice on board the rover, at this moment.

"Follow me, boys!" said the pilot, rushing forward with Sir Robert, cutlass in hand.

The pirates numbered some forty men, all told; but they were fighting for booty, while those on board the Substitute were struggling for their lives. On came the rovers to the bow of the sloop, when they were met by Sir Robert and the pilot with their crew in a hand to hand conflict. In some respects, those on board of the Substitute had the advantage; they were all armed alike, and with a weapon that every English sailor of those days knew how to wield, while their enemies had armed themselves with such weapons as chance had afforded them—some only with guns, others hatchets, and a few with swords and pistols, besides which, the pirates had lost their commander at the onset, though he who led on the boarding party seemed a master spirit and held his men in awe and obedience.

"Steady, boys, steady," said the pilot, "wait till they are close on you, and fire *low*."

The men understood the meaning of the order and obeyed it.

Sir Robert, with his herculean strength, was dealing death at the heel of the bowsprit to every man that came over the bows of the sloop, at the spot where he stood. He had chosen a partially sheltered point, where he was not seen, and as each man stepped over the bulwark upon the deck, he cut him down; nor was the trick discovered until *nine* of the pirates lay dead upon the forecastle, from the stroke of his cutlass. In the meantime, the pilot and the men were doing good execution at another point on the bow, where the rovers were attempting to board. Only two of the Substitute's people had been shot, while fourteen of the rovers were already laid low, when the leader of the boarding party discovered the manner in which he was losing his men by the trick Sir Robert was playing him, and gave the signal of recall.

The pirates were enraged beyond all control, to think that so many of their number had been killed, and that they should meet with such determined resistance from so small a number of men. The truth was, the people of the Substitute were under strict discipline, and obeyed implicitly every order, and, having been so long together, acted in perfect concert.

One poor fellow, Jack Spencer, who was shot in the leg after doing good execution upon the rovers, was now unable to stand, and drawing his body under the lee of the bulwark, he called on his messmates to pass him their pistols, which he kept loaded for them, putting two bullets into each, by way of interest as he said, for the wound he'd got.

It was no trifling assistance to the crew, to be supplied with loaded weapons as quick as they had discharged those they held. It was equal to adding six or eight efficient men to their number, and the pilot, seeing how well this operated, had a dozen extra pistols and plenty of ammunition handed out to Jack Spencer, that he might be able to give them loaded arms as fast as they called for them. Neither the pirate nor those on board the Substitute had any cannon—the battle was entirely carried on with small arms by both parties.

"Jack," said the pilot, as he came to renew his pistols, both of which he had discharged with good effect, "you are worth a dozen of those rascals still, though you are shot so badly."

"Never mind me, your honor," said Jack, "just give 'em cold lead to pay for it—that's all."

There was a pause now in the conflict; the pirates, feeling the effect of the deadly aim of Sir Robert and the pilot, had shrunk back to shelter, for they had suffered terribly. But those on board the Substitute knew very well that this was only a temporary lull in the fight, and that it would soon be renewed with increased vigor. And this was the case, for the pirates, seemingly resolved upon a desperate sally, came in large numbers and together. This should have been their policy in the first place. They now placed the Substitute's people at fault, and came down upon the deck a half-dozen at a time. The leader of the boarders appeared to be carried away with madness, and led on his men in the most reckless manner, his clear, stern voice ringing loudly above the din of the fight.

Of course, the crew of the Substitute were obliged to yield before such overwhelming numbers, and were already driven abaft the main hatch, when Sir Robert found himself nearly confronted by the leader of the boarders. At first he started back with surprise, and lowered the point of his weapon; he was certain that he knew that face, and the voice too was not unfamiliar to his ear, as the orders were issued to his followers. The pause was but for one moment, and the next all was forgotten, and the leader and Sir Robert crossed swords. A few strokes served to show that both were masters of the weapon they held, but Sir Robert's herculean strength seemed to place the skill of the other at fault; a rapid pass, following up a feint made in another quarter, cut the cords of the rover's left wrist terribly, and maddened him so, that before Sir Robert could recover, he dashed his sword from him with one skilful blow. Sir Robert was now completely disarmed, but his presence of mind did not desert him, for he seized the rover about his body, just below the waist, before the latter could understand the attack, and, with his extraordinary muscular power, bore him to the side and threw him into the sea.

It was all the work of an instant of time, and Sir Robert sprang, with a cutlass caught up from the deck, once more upon the assailants. His arm swept like a scythe among them, and already they began to waver, having lost the directing orders of him that Sir Robert had cast into the sea. It was soon whispered around among them that he was overboard, and that they must attempt his rescue. They began to fall back once more, and as they did so, they passed again within range of Jack Spencer's arm, who had a dozen pistols loaded by his side. These he coolly delivered one by one upon the rovers, making terrible havoc, for he was within six feet of the most of them as he fired. The effect was electric. The rovers could stand this cross fire no longer, and the few of them that were able, retreated most precipitately to the deck of their own vessel.

There was now probably not a dozen effective men among the pirates, so severely had they been disabled; in the first place by Sir Robert's trick, which cost them ten of their number in some three or four minutes of time, and then by Jack Spencer's raking fire upon them, as they fell back after the loss of the second officer, who had led them on.—They were completely overcome and beaten, and had Sir Robert and the pilot chosen, they might have gone on board and taken the piratical craft. But many of the people of the

Substitute were severely wounded, and the pilot gave orders for a couple of men to go forward and cut the grapnels that bound the vessels together at the bow. This was quickly done, and the two crafts swung clear of each other.

The pirates were but too happy to be left alone, to attempt any pursuit of the Substitute, and before night-fall the two vessels were far out of sight from each other.

Doubtless ere this, the reader has surmised that the two persons described in the early part of this story, and who befriended the poor girl Edith, bringing her with so much trouble from the tap room in St. Giles, London, were Sir Robert Brompton and the pilot Walter Manning.

The Substitute at last brought them safe to England, and the arrival of Sir Robert proved to be most opportune, as it regarded his pecuniary interests, for he found that his faithful agent and friend, Frederick Howard, had suddenly died, a few weeks previous, of a violent attack of brain fever, leaving Sir Robert's affairs in the most exposed and critical situation, and yet, as Sir Robert himself observed, in as good shape as could be expected under the circumstances. Another reason why Sir Robert's arrival at this time was most opportune, was the fact that it had been generally believed in England, owing to his long absence and loss on the island, that he had been drowned at sea, and in a few weeks more, had he not appeared to claim his property, the courts under the law would have taken it in charge, and have proceeded to administer upon it accordingly.

"Report had got me dead and buried, or rather eaten up by the fishes, Walter."

"And your heirs at law, Sir Robert, were perfectly willing to submit to the will of Providence."

"O, yes, particularly, as in my case, those heirs at law were embraced in the government."

"Have you none of sufficient nearness in blood to have claimed to be your heir?" asked Walter.

"None."

"That is odd."

"I am a lone man, Walter."

"But not without many warm friends, Sir Robert," said Walter.

"Bah! sunshine friends, fair-weather sympathizers; they would fade away like a January thaw, if I were suddenly to become poor. But I care not for them. I will fix my own affairs now."

"You are more than half right, Sir Robert."

All these matters were duly arranged, and Sir Robert and Walter settled down in domestic life at home.

Walter Manning observed immediately after their arrival that there was something upon Sir Robert's mind that troubled him greatly—a subject, however, to which Walter never referred, nor did Sir Robert ever allude to the matter, but kept it most sacredly within his own breast. Fearing to annoy or tease him by referring to the matter, Walter remained quiet, though he could not help often speculating in his own mind upon its cause. Sometimes he thought that Sir Robert must play, and lose largely, and that his loss perhaps annoyed him; but yet as he was never short of money, but operated whenever he had occasion to do so freely, and at will, commanding ample resources, this supposition did not seem reasonable.

Not unfrequently Sir Robert Brompton would be absent for days at a time, and no one of the family knew where he was, and after such periods of absence he would return quite exhausted and worn out from apparent exposure and physical exertions, and more gloomy and depressed than he had been before. But Walter Manning reasoned that if he chose to keep his business a secret, he had a perfect right to do so, nor was it his part to be inquisitive in his patron's private affairs; true, he would like to have administered to his relief if possible, but this, perhaps, might not be.

Walter Manning in the meantime pursued his studies with unremitting diligence, and read law with an eminent barrister of London, under the liberal patronage of his friend Sir Robert, though the gems they had brought from the lone island had produced him ample means for support, a sum exceeding forty thousand pounds. Five years passed on thus, until the period when we have introduced the readers to these pages in one of the tap rooms of London.

And now we must again return to the gentle Edith and her history, at a most important period to her.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BURGLARY.

"*Outlaw.* Stand, sir, and throw us that you have about you."
"*Val.* Ruffians, forego that rude, uncivil touch."—TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA.

HAVING brought the reader once more safely to London, after a long voyage and many adventures, let us introduce him again to the household of Sir Robert Brompton, where Edith is sharing the kind solicitude of the good Mrs. Marlow, and where Sir Robert and Walter Manning are enjoying a quiet domestic happiness. The observant reader will understand that the scenes which we have depicted in the last four chapters, were of *prior* occurrence to the opening scenes of our story, and we may yet, in the relation of the varied scenes that we portray, go back still farther, to lay before him such phases of our plot as shall best entertain and interest him.

Sir Robert Brompton's household consisted of himself, Walter, Edith, Mrs. Marlow, and four servants of each sex. Sir Robert had employed Mrs. Marlow since his return from India, and found in her just such a person as his necessities required. Edith during the day was constantly engaged with her masters, but the evening was devoted to cheerful fireside associations, when Walter would read aloud from some interesting book, or they would converse or play some simple game together, even Sir Robert joining with avidity in the performance.

A twelvemonth of this sort of life, and the advantages of the best instructers, had vastly improved Edith, who now bore no perceptible traces of her former life. Her manners had gradually become polished and easy, her language, under the able instructers her patron provided, was elegant and correct, and every evidence of her taste gave token of delicacy and refinement. The life of ease and healthful exercise which she now enjoyed, had also much changed her in person. She was taller, and her figure was more full and rounded in outline, than when we first met her. The natural color of her cheek, which was fitful before, had now become permanent, giving a rose-like freshness to her fair complexion, while the sweet influence of intelligence and mental culture upon the physiognomy, lighted up her already marked beauty of feature. This decided change in his protegée seemed to please and gratify Sir Robert not a little, nor was Walter Manning an unobservant witness. Sir Robert doted upon her as though she had been his own child, Walter loved her as a sister.

Associates of her own age and sex were found for Edith, and of a class to add to her improvement by their intimacy and companionship, and the poor orphan who had so lately performed the most menial offices of a vulgar

tap-room, with thieves and pickpockets for its frequenters, now found herself happy, and receiving all the comfort and consideration of the most favored child of fortune. She herself was not unmindful of the contrast that frequently presented itself to her mind, and its realization would often puzzle her. But she was very happy and thankful to those who had befriended her. She had learned to look for the return of Sir Robert whenever he was absent, with the utmost impatience and love, and when he did come from his pleasure or business engagements in town, she received him always with such pure, unaffected gladness of heart, that its sincerity and truth even with Sir Robert's jealous and sensitive disposition, were not to be misconstrued or doubted.

Sir Robert was still very sensitive in relation to his personal appearance; and his lameness, as well as the marks upon his face, left by the sickness he had experienced in India, were both sources of constant chagrin to his over-sensitive mind; but he was happy in believing that these external objects had no weight with such an affection as Edith bore him, and once in his life he felt assured that he was loved for himself alone, sincerely loved by a pure and innocent creature to whom he became hourly more devoted and attached. His heart had yearned for some such affection as he now enjoyed, for many years, long before he was married, ay, and when he was married, too: for his jealousy then often rendered him most miserable. But now his fortune seemed changed—the sunny side of the picture presented itself to his view, and Sir Robert Brompton was comparatively a happy man; no one is wholly so.

Yet it was a strange sight to see them together, Sir Robert with his coarse, pitted face, and limping gait, contrasted with Edith's fair complexion and faultless form. Still, as she hung upon his arm and looked up into his face to see as well as hear him speak, the most casual observer would have marked the depth and sincerity of the love that beamed from her large, plaintive, blue eyes. It acted like a charm upon Sir Robert.

"Do you get on pleasantly with your instructers, Edith?" he asked, kissing her fair forehead as she leaned thus affectionately upon him.

"O yes, Sir Robert, they are very attentive," she replied, "and strive to teach me everything."

"And your music?" continued Sir Robert, toying with her soft and luxuriant hair.

"Is so delightful."

"You really like it then, Edith?" asked her patron, with evident satisfaction.

"Indeed I do," she replied, earnestly. "I practise all the time you are away."

"That is right, Edith. I would have you improve in all things, and become as accomplished as the proudest lady in London. Come, Edith, will you try for this?"

"O, indeed I will, for your sake, who have been so kind to me, if not for my own. It is my greatest pleasure to do anything that pleases you, Sir Robert."

"Does Mrs. Marlow strive to make you happy, Edith?"

"She is only too good, Sir Robert, and is never tired of serving me."

"It is well; that shall be her constant duty," he replied.

"Would that there was some way for me to repay all this kindness."

"You are a dear good girl, Edith," said her protector, "and repay me, doubly repay me, every day. To-morrow will be Christmas, and though I shall then have a token for you of my own choosing, yet I know very well that a young lady can suit her own taste so much better than an old fellow like me can do for her, that I want you to go out and choose for yourself this afternoon, and here is a purse for you to spend for the holidays."

"You are too generous with me, dear Sir Robert," said Edith, hesitating to receive the money. "Why, I have over twenty pounds in my purse from your last present, which I have not yet expended, and it will more, much more than serve my wishes."

"Nay, Edith, take it, and use it as you will. You know I have often told you that I have enough to supply the most extravagant desires, and it pleases me to have you enjoy it."

"Thank you kindly, Sir Robert," said Edith. "I can only thank you."

Edith went to her chamber to dress for the afternoon, and to calculate what she should purchase for the kind housekeeper, Mrs. Marlow, and what for Jane and Mary and the rest

of the servants, all of whom were so kind to their dear young lady, as they always called her. Edith really loved them in return for their kindness and assiduity. Her remarkable change of life made no difference in her feelings: she was the same simple and true-hearted girl as before her elevation. Though with half a dozen persons at her beck and call, she assumed no airs of petty authority, and what she directed, was so done that it seemed a privilege to obey her, and thus she fell naturally into her position, well gracing it.

It was a cold and cheerless night in December, heavy clouds coursed over the sky and obscured even the pale light of the stars, for the moon had long since gone down. There was a chilly, biting frost in the air, as though the atmosphere were out of humor, and the clock even, which had just struck two, did it in a most doleful tone. Shadows were deep and dark over the great city, and none were abroad save the thickly muffled watchmen, and they kept so close in each friendly shelter that offered, you would have thought no one was stirring at all. The city had wrapped its mantle of night about it, and lay down to sleep, and though there was no motion, no bustle now, yet its great heart of humanity throbbed on, and its pulses beat as quickly as ever; the body only slumbered.

At this lone hour, fitting time for deeds of darkness, two men and a boy crept stealthily one after the other, over the high wooden fence that enclosed the yard in the rear of Sir Robert Brompton's house. Had they been three cats instead of three human beings, they could scarcely have accomplished this feat more quietly, or with more facility. The one who first went over placed a short hand screw in the fence, evidently made for the purpose, turning it quite through to the other side, about one third way up the height of the wall, at such a distance from the ground as to be easily reached by the foot. Standing upon this instrument, another one was inserted in a like manner above it, the two, in connection with the top of the fence, thus forming an easy pair of steps on either side of the wall to ascend or descend upon.

With these preliminary arrangements, the three passed quietly over the fence into the yard beyond.

The boy was very small, though by his ready movements and the easy manner in whic he bestowed himself, he was evidently no stranger to the part he was expected to perform. He spoke not a word, though he was suffering evidently from the chilly influences of the night air, and was in fact very thinly clad, but keeping as closely as possible to the other rough looking objects who were his companions, he seemed quietly to wait the proper time for him to act. Not a word was spoken by either of them; their greatest object seemed to be not to make the least noise. But they had no need of words, for they seemed to understand each other fully, proceeding with perfect intelligence and speed, nor did they pause here even for a single moment to arrange any matter.

Once they did pause, and drew close together as they heard the growl of a dog.

"Curse it," whispered the larger one of the party, "you didn't say there was any dog here."

"Isn't that over the fence?" asked the other, listening.

"It's goin'along the street," whispered the boy, returning from the fence, where he had put his ear.

It was so; some one passing was accompanied by a dog, whose instinct had detected something wrong about the spot, and had led him to utter the low, but deep growl peculiar to this animal when he scents danger.

One of the men now took his station near the fence, at the spot where they had come over, and from whence he could not only hear what was going on upon the opposite side, but could also overlook the several directions of approach in the yard itself. This companion with the boy immediately approached a back door of the house opening to the south, and at once commenced operations in good earnest, to effect an entrance.

A sharp and peculiarly shaped knife was first introduced into the thinnest part of the door, being a lower pannel; a small hole being thus formed, the burglar introduced a small circular saw, so sharp and cunningly handled as to cut its way with scarcely a particle of noise. At this the man worked with the most unyielding industry for nearly twenty minutes, when he was enabled to remove a piece of the pannel, leaving an aperture of some twenty inches in circumference. The boy had been

a silent observer of this operation, but as soon as the piece was removed, he at once threw off his cap and jacket, and placing his head and shoulders within the hole, was thrust through to the other side of the door by his older companion, until he had quite disappeared.

"Be careful how you move the key and bolt," whispered the man, placing his face at the hole through which he had thus thrust the boy. "Turn the key easy, and slip the bolt lightly. Don't be in a hurry now, and make a noise; do you understand? Do it *slowly*, remember that, boy, *slow and still!*"

"I knows how, hasn't I done it afore," said the boy, confidently to the other. as he prepared to open the door as directed, and admit his older companions.

"Is he in?" asked the man who had been waiting at the fence all the while, and who now came up to the spot somewhat impatiently. "I say is he in?"

"Yes, he's just gone in. Hark! There goes the lock, well done, too," replied the other, as the key was gently turned by the boy on the inside, who showed that he was no novice at the business.

"And that's the bolt," said his companion, as the second fastening was quietly removed from the eye by the little adept within.

"That's a smart boy, Bill; he's worth his weight in guineas. Don't he work like a charm, eh?" said he who had cut the door and put the boy through it.

"Ay; he's well enough in a *small way*," whispered the other, jokingly, "but come on, we must work lively, or we shall have the daylight upon us before we have bagged the game."

"My fingers itch to handle some of that rich plate they say the old fellow brought with him from India," said he who had cut through the pannel."

"Open the way, my little jewel," whispered the larger of the two to the boy.

"Is you all ready?" asked the boy.

"Yes, yes; open it quietly."

In the next moment the door was quietly opened by the boy on the inside, and the two burglars had successfully effected an entrance into Sir Robert's house.

Once on the inside, they looked carefully about them, to see the arrangement of the house, peering along the passage way or entry, and making out to their satisfaction which was the kitchen, which the store room, etc. They were old hands at the business; they did not dive at once into a search, but like skilful soldiers, laid their plans coolly, and surveyed the ground before they commenced the attack. Having acquainted themselves with the "lay of the land," as one of them remarked, they returned again to the door to see that all was clear for the retreat when it was necessary to do so.

"Boy," whispered one of them, cautiously, as they approached.

"Yes," answered the boy, shrugging his shoulders with the cold.

"Are you sleepy, you rogue?" asked one of the men.

"No, I ain't sleepy."

"Well, come here."

"Take this," said the larger of the two men, handing the boy a small silver whistle; "and if there is any sign of discovery, blow it and give us the alarm. Do you understand?"

"Yes," said the boy.

"No false alarms now, don't blow it unless there is good reason—remember that."

"And mind you don't get to sleep now," said the other.

Though the boy had resumed his coat and cap, still he was, as we have said, very thinly clad for the season, and though uncomplaining, was shivering with the cold, which the last speaker observing, he took off his own outside garment, and threw it about the child's body, again repeating his instructions as to watchfulness.

This done, the burglars proceeded to prosecute their designs on Sir Robert's plate, each one unloosing a bag that had been tied about his waist until now, intended to hold their plunder.

CHAPTER X.

THE ABDUCTION.

Let us lift up the curtain, and observe
What passes in that chamber. ROGERS.

OPENING their dark lanterns, the two burglars who had thus effected their entrance into the house left the boy, as we have said, and prepared to search for the plate that they seemed to have learned was in the establishment. Indeed a large service of plate was to be found at that period in every house with any pretensions to gentility or wealth in London. But it seemed that Sir Robert's had possessed unusual attraction for the burglars.

Closet after closet was ransacked and overhauled, drawers were tossed indiscriminately into the midst of the rooms, and every nook and corner was carefully though noiselessly searched, but though they occasionally found some articles deemed worthy of a place in their sacks, yet they could neither discover the plate nor any signs of it. In this dilemma, they resolved to seek the sleeping apartments of some of the family, and by threats, so to act upon their fears as to cause them to discover where the articles which they sought were now stored.

"Have a care," said the larger of the two, "that we wake up but one."

"Shall I try the doors?"

"Lightly on that side—I will try these," said the other, proceeding to do so.

"They are all locked—curse the luck; what's to be done?" asked he who cut through the door.

"Stay, here is one that is not locked," whispered the larger of the two, just as they were about to give up the plan of seeking any of the inmates of the family.

They shaded their lanterns and crept stealthily into the room with a step so light that it gave no sound to the ear, a practice that they had become so perfect in as to perform it with wonderful dexterity. The furniture in the room showed the villains at once that they were in the apartment of some respected member of the family, and not that of a servant, as they stole towards the richly hung bedstead.

"There's some one sleeping here," whispered the smaller of the two men to the other, pointing to the bed on which they turned the light of their lanterns for a moment.

"Is it a man or a woman," whispered the other, peering about the room in the dim light of the dark lanterns which they carried.

"It is a woman, don't you see?" said his companion, pointing to some clothes that lay upon a chair near by, and which indicated the occupant of the room.

"The better for our purpose," said the other, with evident satisfaction.

"Hark! did you hear nothing?" whispered the smaller of the two men.

"Nothing."

"Stay, there it is again. I was sure I heard something."

"It's only a rusty sign turning upon its hinges," said the other.

"Curse the noise, it sounds so like a human voice that it almost speaks."

"Fudge, never mind the noise. We're losing precious time."

"Well, well," whispered the other, "I *am* a little nervous, I know."

"Don't play the woman here," said the other, sternly. "Come close."

As they drew close to the bedside, the light of both lanterns was thrown full upon the face of the unconscious sleeper, as she lay there in innocent slumber, while the two villains leaned over her!

What a contrast there was between their rough, forbidding countenances and that of the sleeper! A picture, a tableau of innocence and of guilt! How gently the breast of the sleeper heaved, how calm, how sweet and serene the expression of her lips! The sight of so much loveliness and purity made these guilty men pause and look at each other almost in doubt whether to turn and leave her there, or to go on and carry out their design of forcing from her the information that they so eagerly sought to obtain.

"Why do you look at me in that way?" asked the larger of the two of his companion.

"I don't know," said the other, absently; "wasn't you looking at me?"

"To be sure I was," said the other. "How handsome and innocent she looks," he continued, gazing intently upon the fair creature before them, while her gentle bosom rose and fell in innocent unconsciousness.

"Handsome," said the other, with emphasis, as he whispered in his companion's ear, "that's all *outside*. But what would you give, Bill, to *sleep* like that?"

He who was thus addressed mused for a moment in silence, reflecting upon what the other had said.

"Stay, she is waking," said he at last starting from his reverie, as the sleeper moved a little. "Turn the light a little one side," he continued, "and be ready to stop her mouth with the sheet."

"Never fear for me when the time comes for action," said the other.

It was no sooner said than done, and as the startled and bewildered girl opened her eyes, the sheet was quickly forced against her lips, and firmly holden there, so as completely to smother any effort at articulation. At the same time he who held his hand upon her mouth in this way, told her that she need not fear, that they would not harm her if she would direct them where to find the articles that they were in search of, but at the same time solemnly assuring her that the first word that escaped her lips louder than a whisper, would be the signal for her instant death. Still stronger to enforce this threat and to prevent her from attempting to give any alarm to the persons in the house, he who had been called Bill drew from his bosom a heavy bladed sheath knife, and deliberately prepared it for use before her very eyes. As he did so he came more nearly to the girl, and once more bringing the light so as to fall full upon her face, he paused and seemed to gaze in amazement for more than a minute at her, and then said in a hoarse whisper:

"Is it possible, Edith, that this is you! Have I found you at last?"

"I know you not," said Edith, in an agony of fear, as she gazed upon his face frowning ominously upon her.

"Don't you know me, don't you know Bill at mother Giles'?"

"Alas! yes, I do remember you," she said, covering her face with her hands, and shuddering as though a chilling blast of the night air had swept over her unprotected person.

"I thought you could hardly have forgotten me," replied the man, with a sarcastic smile that became merged in a ghastly grin, so villanous was his expression.

Dazzled and bewildered by the light, the startled girl had not before carefully observed the faces of the men who were before her, but she now discovered in her interrogator, the person of one of the most daring and reckless villains who had frequented the tap room in St. Giles, and indeed one of the very party whom Sir Robert Brompton and Walter Manning had so signally and promptly overcome at the time when they brought her away from her

fearful associations on that well remembered night. She knew not what to do in this fearful dilemma. She did not dare to lift her voice to give the alarm, for she knew the character of these men too well, and that they would count the taking of her life of not a pin's importance, provided it was necessary to further their object of plunder. And then one of them had recognized her! That thrilled her to the very soul, and in that exciting moment even, she paused to realize it, for it was the first time this had occurred since she left their vile haunts.

"Come," said the largest burglar, "you must up and show us where the plate is kept."

"O, spare me, as you hope for mercy, spare me," said Edith.

"Will you not show where the plate is?" asked Bill, meaningly.

"Go, and leave me, I pray you go. I promise you not to discover that you have been here."

"We must handle the plate first," said the other burglar; "come, girl, tell us where it is."

"I know not where the articles are that you seek, upon my soul I do not," said the poor girl, after a moment's pause, while she sat trembling in bed.

"It is *something* to have found you!" replied he who had recognized her, "if we don't find the silver at all. Come, get up, Edith, you must follow us, and quickly, too!"

"O, no, I can't go, I can't," she sobbed bitterly, as she drew the clothes tightly about her.

"Then I shall make you; I'm no trifler, Edith, and I say you *must* come with me."

"O, do not take me away, I pray you do not. I will give you all that I have got, all my money and jewels. I will do anything for you that I can. There, in that upper drawer is my purse, there are a hundred pounds in it, but do not, oh! do not take me from here," she sobbed most bitterly.

"Hist," said the other villain, "you make too much noise;" at the same moment he opened the drawer and secured the money that had been referred to, with evidences of strong satisfaction.

"Gal, I think you know me," said he who had recognized her. "Now if you do not get up and dress and follow us at once, that is your winding sheet."

As the burglar spoke, he pointed with the blade he held, to the clothes that covered the affrighted girl. At this moment, as the burglar completed his threat, a low, but shrill whistle resounded upon their ears from the boy at the door, being repeated thrice in quick succession.

"Hark!" said the larger of the two, "that is the boy's whistle."

"It is the signal: we are discovered!" said the other, much excited.

"Go down and see what that means," said he who was called Bill; "I will remain here," and then turning to Edith, he continued, "come, Miss, hurry on these things, there is no time to be lost—quick, I say," and the villain laid his rough hands upon her arm, forcibly hurrying her from the bed to the floor, when she hastily put on her clothes.

"O! I pray you do not take me from here," she sobbed, at last sinking upon the floor in an agony of grief and fear. "Surely, I can do you no good, and it will make me so miserable."

"Edith," he said "I swear that unless you follow me peaceably, you shall die. Think you I am one to keep my word upon such a subject or not?"

"But I can be of no use to you—do not take me away."

"I talk no more," said the burglar, gazing sternly upon her features; "you will either go with me out of this house, or, mark me, I will leave you a corpse in it."

Edith's heart sank within her, she saw that it was of no avail to oppose her captor; but still she hoped that something might happen to protect her, and affright the burglars away.

At this moment the other burglar with the boy re-appeared silently in the room, and reported that the watch had discovered something that excited their suspicions, and had evidently found the screws in the fence, and when they left the door, they were clambering the fence, and were over in the yard below.

"Did you lock the door?" asked the person who seemed to be the leader, now that a case of emergency had arrived, and who had remained with Edith.

"Yes, we locked it, and bolted it too," said the little boy.

"Then we must escape by the front. Go down to the basement, and open the way. I'll follow quickly. Come, Miss, at the first step that you falter, I will bury this knife to the hilt in your very heart."

"Here, come back," said the larger of the two men to the other, "we shall have to support her."

"Softly," said the other, "this noise in the yard may awake the sleepers. Shall I open the lantern?"

"Yes, quietly, now."

"Here, boy, take my bag."

"No 'blunt'?" asked the boy, as he weighed the bag in his hand, surprised that it was so light.

"The easier for you to carry, be easy and go on," replied the man.

The boy threw the sack over his shoulder, and said no more.

Thus prepared, with the trembling girl between them, and so weak that she was almost insensible, the two burglars and the boy stole down stairs slowly to the front basement, where their tools were quickly brought to bear upon one of the windows on the inside, and a passage was soon cleared for them into the street, by removing a part of a sash and several panes of glass. Terrified beyond endurance, Edith had now fainted, and the burglars saw that if they would take her with them, they must do so by main strength, for she was perfectly insensible.

At this state of affairs they heard the watchmen in the yard, who seemed to have discovered the hole in the door, and thus became satisfied of foul play, and were preparing for a regular search. Already they had begun to thunder at the door to awake the inmates, and the burglars knew very well that a possé would soon be summoned to surround the house and cut off their retreat. As yet, there seemed to be but two of the watchmen at the door, and both of these were still at the back of the house, but their rattles were already sprung.

The boy had crept through the window, and had charge of the booty.

"Bill, it wont do to take the girl—I tell you, it wont—it will lead to our being taken ourselves," said the other burglar, hurriedly.

"Nonsense—bear a hand here."

"But I tell you, it's downright folly," continued the other, earnestly.

"If you are afraid, take care of yourself.—I'm in no hurry."

"I'm not afraid, Bill—you know that ain't my failin'."

All this while the larger of the burglars had been arranging Edith's dress about her, an tying her frock about her feet with his neck handkerchief, and depositing her lifeless body on the sill of the window. This done, he said:

"Will you help me, my cove, or shall I operate alone?"

"Come, Bill, take my advice, and leave the girl," said the other, coaxingly.

"Go she shall, though I carry her alone," he replied. "There is no more time to be lost. Step through there, and I'll pass her along."

"Well, if you say so, Bill, but I don't like this part of the business," said the other. "It isn't what we came here for, and we risk all, without gaining anything."

The lifeless body of the poor girl, still happily insensible, was passed through the window, and the burglar sprang quickly through after it, and lifting her from the ground as though she had been a mere child, and throwing her upon his shoulder, was soon lost in the darkness and maze of streets that run towards the east part of the town.

The watch seeing the door fastened, presumed, of course, that the robber had fled, and therefore did not take such steps as they would have done if they had supposed it at all probable that they were on the premises. After effecting their entrance by arousing the family, they saw the mistake, and were satisfied that while they were operating at the back of the house, the burglars were escaping from the front part.

Edith's loss drove the whole family circle at Sir Robert Brompton's house almost frantic.

CHAPTER XI.

THE ROBBER OF THE RHINE.

——The good old plan
That they should get, who have the power,
And they should keep, who can. WORDSWORTH.

LEAVING busy London, with all its crime and splendor, its poverty and wealth, the reader will now come with us to the valley of valleys, the romantic and classic Rhine.

The singular combination of beautiful scenery and miserable associations, is perhaps no where so strongly combined, as in that valley so famed in story, and from which have sprung so many wild and thrilling legends. The beautiful banks of the far famed river, ornamented with soft luxuriant groves and stately castles, and remarkable everywhere for its many classic associations, presents as a whole one of the most romantic pictures in all of Europe. Still the deep blue eyes of the poor peasant girls, so strangely large, glare upon you oftentimes with the scowl of famine, while they are compelled to labor like beasts of burthen for the humblest means of subsistence. The starving hamlet and the stately castle are here side by side, forming a painter's paradise, and a grave for a poet's heart.

Springing as the noble river does from the very bosom of the Alps, midway between Italy and Switzerland, it runs a course through the valley, of four hundred leagues before it meets the ocean. Its banks on either side for two thirds of the distance are covered with richly yielding and highly cultivated vineyards, with ancient and stately castles, and towers and convents, and the strong holds of the old feudal lords and knights of the soil, in times when might made right, and every castle had its secret dungeon and tales of horror. When daring robbers, under the cloak of knighthood, committed the vilest deeds, and stole away noble ladies from their fathers' halls, or emptied the coffers of a neighboring convent. Innumerable are the legends and stories of mysterious interest hanging over these ancient piles, now mostly gone to ruin and decay, moss covered, and tenanted by the bats and owls, suggestive themes, in their picturesque beauty, to the imagination.

At this period, gentle reader, when we would conduct you to this romantic spot, the banks of the Rhine and the surrounding or immediate country were the theatre of exploits and the haunts of men as extraordinary as the world has ever produced. The unsettled state of the government, and the conflicting opinions of the various parties, gave prevalence to a lawless and reckless spirit, which seemed to pervade every class of the community; not even excepting a portion of the peasantry themselves, and giving rise to a reign of terror that is registered in letters of blood on the pages of history. At this startling period, fostered and matured by the wild spirit of the times, there sprang up innumerable roving

bands of robbers and banditti, who preyed upon the resources of the people, generally, however, favoring the humbler classes, and, in fact, for a considerable period, making themselves actual masters of the valley of the Rhine.

If any of the leaders of these bands were particularly marked out, or pursued by any local interest, they found but little difficulty in making good their escape from their pursuers and from justice. From Belgium, for instance, they would easily pass into Holland, if pursuit was strongly pressed, or into the countries bordering on the Rhine, and there the minute subdivision of the Germanic confederation, in which each petty prince maintained a most jealous spirit of independence of the rest, rendered pursuit of the fugitives among their respective domains, almost a hopeless and fruitless task, and the most noted banditti often thus escaped.

Of these times, particularly, we wish to speak, in the drawing of our story for the reader.

Among the leaders of the bands referred to, were the well known names of Picard, Brebault, Mersen, Rospeck, and that pattern of chivalry among banditti, the renowned Schinderhanes. This latter, known all over Europe by the title of the Robber of the Rhine, is as famed for his eccentricity of character as for his boldness and bravery, as noted for his charities as for his robberies, and as much loved by the poor as he was hated by the proud and noble in rank, and whose life forms a series of romantic adventures, rather than of deeds of bloodshed. But yet he could be cruel, and his hands were not unsteeped in blood. He was born of humble parentage, somewhere upon the banks of the river, where he was engaged from boyhood in the lowly occupation of a peasant and a vinedresser, until for some petty and innocent breach of the law, he was sentenced and publicly whipped. It was not the pain that he experienced, physically, that was so bitter to his spirit, it was the mental wounds that each stroke of the lash inflicted; it was the agony of shame that corroded deeper than the sores upon his back, and he told those who had executed the sentence, that it should cost them dear. The humble peasant was in earnest, and from that hour he dedicated all his energies of body and mind, to revenge himself upon that law which had thus, without cause, disgraced him and his name forever.

The judge who sentenced him was found murdered in his bed, and the executioner who had applied the lash, was discovered near the castle walls, stabbed to the heart.

As he grew in years, so did his deeds grow in magnitude and atrocity, until he collected about him a daring band of men, of spirit congenial with his own, and many of whom were goaded on to revenge by like injuries with that which had embittered the heart of their leader. With this troop, well mounted and well armed, he swept the country, putting at defiance all that the magistrates could send against him. His tactics were of the most shrewd and cunning character, and when force would not accomplish his daring plans, he resorted to the most subtle strategy.

By certain preconcerted signs, the various members of his band could always recognize each other, wherever they met, and these signs and tokens were guarded from being divulged by the most awful oaths and penalties that could be invented, and perhaps have never yet been revealed, except to members of the fraternity. He would sometimes disperse his entire band over the country, in pursuance of some well digested plan; one here, one there, no two together. Sometimes they were thrown into the walls of the city; no two lodging together, or offering to recognize each other in the streets, until, their object gained, they met once more at the rendezvous.—Names, dresses, character, occupation, complexion, and even features, were changed with the most bewildering facility, and thus they were often performing their depredations upon others, under a complete and impenetrable mask, eluding all vigilance, and confounding all precedent.

Schinderhanes was of the most gallant and romantic disposition, being passionately devoted to the gentler sex. It was this trait that prompted him to make love to the high-born and beautiful Julia Blasius, a noble German lady, who, after losing her heart to the robber chief, ran away from her parents and her home, to follow his fortunes and to become his wife; a statement that draws not at all upon fancy for its support, being strictly and historically true.

This lovely and devoted girl was scarcely eighteen, when she left her father's halls for the robber's home in the deep wilds of the forest; but she was ever most true and devoted to him, and so was the robber to her. But his career was a fearful one, in which domestic happiness could scarcely have a chance to display itself; his occupation, so bloody, cruel, and unholy, must soon find a tragical end.—He was at length taken on the German side of the river, tried and condemned, with nineteen of his band, to die by the hand of the executioner; his time had come, his fate was sealed. His young and beautiful wife, with her little child, a handsome boy, attended him constantly. No fear of shame, no dread of publicity, could separate the devoted wife from her husband. But the fatal day at last arrived, when Schinderhanes expiated with his companions the many crimes they had committed.

The faithful wife, the high-born and beautiful Julia Blasius, sad and broken-hearted at his loss, soon followed her husband to the grave, leaving her boy, Karl, to buffet the world alone.

Was it not natural that one thus born and thus influenced, should grow up a robber?

Early realizing the relationship in which he stood to the world, and the position in which fortune from his infancy had placed him, Karl Blasius—for by his mother's last request he took her name—began, while yet a boy, to look upon the world and the laws, as his natural enemy, and to conceive how best he could prepare himself to meet the iron fortune that seemed to lie in his future path.—Through the kindness of those who knew his story, and who had witnessed, during his father's trial, the constant devotedness of his mother, Karl was befriended and cared for.—His patrons saw in the young orphan germs of unusual intelligence and aptitude. He was consequently sent to school, and afforded no mean opportunity of acquiring a well balanced and liberal education. With gratitude for this kindness, which he keenly realized, Karl was diligent and ambitious in his studies for a period of years; but there was to be a tragic end to this seeming calm. The blood that flowed in his veins was of a peculiar stock; he had drawn in rebellion with his mother's milk; it came to him as a natural inheritance, and being one day severely reprimanded and punished by his preceptor, perhaps unjustly, he stabbed him to the heart, and fled at once to the depths of the forest.

This single step was sufficient—his fate was consummated by the act. That fatal blow made Karl Blasius a robber, for he had wantonly outraged the laws; there was no longer a shelter for him among honest people, and but little more than a boy in years, though with the heart and bitter experience of a man, he enrolled himself among the secret banditti. He deemed, like the fatalist, that he was doomed to be a robber, and that in taking this step he was but fulfilling fate.

Remarkable for daring and for the almost mysterious success that seemed to clothe his every effort, Karl rose in the estimation of the band, who saw in him the requisite for command, a quick, intelligent, and decisive spirit, which was well calculated to lead them on successfully to the consummation of their wishes.—Their principal aim was of course the amassing of gold, and their depredations were upon the rich only, whom they considered their natural enemies. These feelings and purposes, Karl heartily subscribed to, and ere many months after he had joined them, though yet but eighteen years of age, he was unanimously chosen captain of the band, which numbered in its ranks more than a hundred men, made up of bold outlaws—each one of whom had some real or fancied wrong to spur him on to revenge upon the law.

Karl's better informed mind saw at once the weakness of the association, of which he had become the head, and with cunning ability, he at once set about a thorough re-organization of the troops. He saw that their safety and success lay solely in union of purpose and action, and that over such a rude mingling of different spirits and tempers, there must be one *master*, one mind whose will must be absolute, and of this he soon convinced his comrades, who yielded at once to his well conceived arguments, and made him in all respects their absolute master. Once endowed with this authority, Karl Blasius took good care to maintain it, but not abuse the confidence entrusted to him, and he immediately set about organizing one of the most desperate and successful bodies of banditti that had devastated the valley of the Rhine, since the death of his

father. No traveller could pass the route that intersected the mountains, or roads within a couple of leagues of the stronghold of the band, without paying a liberal tribute to the robber's treasury. When they were not resisted upon the road, in the execution of their object, the banditti simply enforced this tax, but if compelled to it by opposition, they were bold and dangerous.

Karl knew full well his father's history, and it was not without its effect upon his conduct. Indeed, with a sort of fatality, he seemed to imitate his course as nearly as possible. He knew that it had been a principle of his father to fight against the rich, and to divide his spoils with the poor. He realized that he had stronger incentives to do this than even his father had, for his mother's rich and noble family had disowned and spurned her from their door, when, after his father's death, finding herself alone and unprotected, she begged for shelter and assistance at her father's castle gates.

The young robber remembered this, and how, indeed, could he forget it? It was the incentive in many of his daring plans. He revered the memory of his mother, and though he was of such a tender age when she died, he remembered her person well, and often had he sworn that his revenge should be deep and lasting. He resolved that his life should be a crusade against the class whom fortune had placed so far above him, and he was faithful to his plan of action; for, though he robbed the rich, the humble peasant shared bountifully of his gains; there was no stinting in his gifts; he was generosity's self, and his charity was as copious and free as the flow of the river that washed the banks of the noble valley.

Karl became a complete adept in his profession; he was so perfect at disguises, that he had often for the experiment's sake, deceived the members of his own band, and his remarkable knowledge of all that transpired in the busy circles of the neighboring cities, showed that, in assumed characters, he must be often among them. On market days, he and his band moved among the busy and thoughtless masses, disguised so as to represent dealers and marketmen themselves, but only intent upon gaining such information as would be of professional use to them. Watching rich merchants, and ingratiating themselves into their confidence, and learning their plans and habits, and if they were about to tempt the highway with money in their possession, and if so, at what hour and point they might be met with.

Many of these dealers who afterwards entered the passes of the mountains, or threaded the dark paths of the dense woods, were never heard of again. The knowing ones said that such had resisted until by exasperating the robbers, they lost their lives as well as their gold. Others would reach their homes, declaring that they had been so mysteriously robbed, that they thought it must be evil spirits that had done it, not men. Some said they were surrounded by the woods seemingly, and nothing else, save the hooting noise of owls, or the cry of some startled bird.—Terrified at this, they would pass on, and strive to get through the route. But when they had entered some lonely pass, or more deeply shaded path, or night had darkened their way, some huge, dark object brushed against them, and then almost instantly vanished. Oftentimes this was actually all the encounter they experienced, and yet to their astonishment, their gold was gone.

This mystery that hung about the operations of the banditti, rendered them more potent than any kind of force could have done; and people spoke of them or their deeds with a trembling voice or in whispers, looking about them half as though they expected some strange spirit might be at hand to take revenge upon them. In the inns and hostelries where their deeds were often recounted, the humble people never mentioned Karl or his band, without crossing themselves; and it was universally believed that the robbers had formed some potent league with the evil spirit, who aided them in their plans and objects.—It was a superstitious period, and those influences upon the credulity of the people were of no small advantage to the robbers themselves.

Mounted on spirited horses, the band thus would sometimes appear in numbers upon the highway, and boldly, in the light of mid day, stop the travelling carriage of some nobleman, and with the blandest courtesy possible, inform him that it was the custom, in these parts, for all who passed that way to pay tri-

bute to their treasury, and thus, with scarcely the show of force, they would fleece their victim. Of course this could not always be the case, for sometimes the banditti would fall in with some men of a brave and stubborn disposition, who were not inclined to part with their property without striking a blow in its behalf, and consequently resisted with fatal effect the attack of the robbers. When this was the case, the authorities perhaps, on the subsequent day, would have their attention drawn to the spot by information given by some traveller, and there find a perfect wreck of carriage, harness and trunks, the body of the owner, oftentimes, beneath the wheels and rubbish, with a brace of balls through his brains. The price of resistance!

The strangest fancies seemed to govern the movements of the banditti, who robbed, as we have shown, sometimes in one way, sometimes in another, at times with the most profound secrecy and mystery, at others with open force; and thus they put al calculation as to the form in which they might be expected, quite at fault, and people at ast deemed all preventive measures little better than a useless precaution. Indeed, when these measures were adopted and evident, they seemed to attract the robbers' ambition to overcome them, and they rarely failed to do so.

Nor were the cities free from their occasional visits and depredations. The house of a rich and high official would perhaps be disturbed in the middle of the night, by the knocking of a supposed neighbor at the door, earnestly begging for some medicine, or assistance of some sort in an emergency of sickness. When, yielding to the dictates of humanity, the door would finally be opened by the servant, the supposed old woman would overpower him or her, as the case might be, and a score of banditti would file quietly into the entrance, and without noise take immediate possession of the house, and placing a guard over each of the inmates, prevent an alarm being given.

This having been accomplished without any serious noise, the halls and chambers were then thoroughly ransacked, and every article of value abstracted and disposed of by those who stood ready hard by, in various disguises to take them. The leader of the band would then coolly tell the master of the house, that the building should be burned to the ground on the following night, if he attempted to raise any alarm after they commenced to retreat. The robbers then deliberately left the premises, while the members of the band separated to such points as had already been arranged for their security, to meet again at their rendezvous in the forest, when the city gates should once more be opened, and they in their disguises be enabled to leave the town unknown and unsuspected.

This was the usual mode of their transactions within the city.

Further to perfect their means of obtaining information, a number of resident Jews were always enrolled in their ranks, as auxiliaries, though not admitted to the full secrets of the fraternity. It was their especial business to keep the banditti informed of all important movements, especially of such as might lead to their intercepting gold or other treasures, by knowing the time and route, when and where they would be transported.

These Jews were bound by as fearful oaths, as any of the troop, to faithfulness, and well they knew that the laws of the band were so severe against treachery, that their own lives were not worth a feather's weight, if they in any instance proved unfaithful or traitorous. The robbers had found it necessary to make one or two examples of them, and this was remembered, and acted as a sufficient check upon them ever after, and no reward, however large and liberal in its spirit, had since tempted them to betray their knowledge. Thus secured and perfected, these organizations were of the most dangerous and fearful stability, almost beyond the reach and power of the law.

But we must change the scene, in order to bring up other characters of our story.

CHAPTER XII.

THE UNKNOWN TRAVELLER.

Excellent! I smell a device.—Twelfth Night.

It was at the little inn of Morentz, on one fine summer afternoon, that a pleasure-seeking traveller, to judge by his appearance, was settling his bill for refreshments, when he asked the good-natured landlord, as he took up his pack and staff, which road would lead him to Bronts.

"Bronts," said the host, "do you go there to-night, and alone?"

"Yes," said the traveller, "it is not more than three leagues."

"True."

"And I can walk that distance before nightfall," said the traveller.

"No doubt, you can easily walk that distance, provided you are uninterrupted, but—"

"But! but what?" asked the traveller, not a little interested.

"Why the road, you know, is a bad one, and the robbers only last week, killed a nobleman and all his suite, not more than half way between here and Bronts."

"Indeed," said the traveller, coolly strapping on his pack. "Well, I suppose they had some object in so doing, sir. But I think that it would hardly pay them to shoot such game as I should prove."

"Don't be too sure of that," said the landlord; "none escape their scrutiny."

"Say you so?" said the traveller, musing to himself.

"Wont you stay until a party go over the mountains to-morrow?"

"O, no! I never turned back from danger yet, and I'll not commence now."

"As you will, but I would not go to Bronts to-night, and alone, for a dozen ounces," said the landlord, with a sincerity that attracted the traveller's attention.

The traveller was a young man and evidently an Englishman. His dress was one chosen for service, and seemed to indicate in its style and convenience that the wearer was trudging through this beautiful valley on foot, in order that he might the better enjoy and appreciate its romantic loveliness. His countenance indicated the man of taste; his manners were courteous and refined, showing those unmistakable tokens of high breeding, that one who has seen much of the world and in good society acquires, even in matters of trivial import. The little pack that was slung upon his back and secured across the chest by a strap and buckle, was only large enough to contain a change of linen and a few trifling necessities,

while everything about him bespoke the indolence and comfort of one who seeks his own pleasure, and who was quite at liberty to go on or stay, at his will.

At the moment when the landlord made the last remark relating to the safety of the road, a person who had also been sharing the refreshments of the house, approached them to pay for the same. He laid down the money, and having received the proper change, turned to the Englishman, and said:

"Did you say you were going to Bronts to-night, friend?"

"I did," replied the other, turning towards his interrogator in a friendly manner.

"So am I."

"Indeed? Do you walk?"

"Yes—and you?"

"Walk also."

"Why not go together, then?" said the other. "The road is a lone one at best."

"With all my heart," replied the Englishman, with evident pleasure; "but mine host here tells me that it is a most dangerous route, and that the banditti scour it at all hours."

"That is very true, and if you have money or aught else of value about you, it were better for you to wait until to-morrow, and take advantage of some escort," suggested the other. "As for myself, in the first place I have nothing to lose, and in the next, I am well armed, and therefore I shall go through to-night."

"I have nothing with me of any value to others," said the Englishman, "for the robbers would hardly find my letters of introduction of any value to them, and I have nothing else, except some linen with me."

"Letters of introduction?" repeated his new acquaintance, inquiringly.

"Ay, a few to some of the best families in Bronts," said the other.

"Shall we go on then together, or do you prefer to await an escort?"

"If you can go, I see no reason why I may not do so as well."

"So it looks to me; but you are your own guide," said the other."

"Then I shall go, so good Mr. Landlord give me your prayers."

"I wish you God speed, if you resolve to go."

"Are you armed?" asked his new acquaintance of the Englishman.

"Yes."

"With pistols and knife?"

"Both."

"I have a brace of trusty pistols and this sword cane," said the other, half unsheathing the weapon, "and unless they come in force, we might trouble even a half dozen of the banditti to capture us."

"Let us go on then, at once," said the Englishman, shaking hands with the landlord in leave-taking. "We shall not want to borrow of the night under the circumstances."

"Allons, then," said the other, cheerfully, as they passed out together.

The stranger who had thus introduced himself, was a young man of some twenty-four years of age, and bearing in his appearance the token and bearing of a German student. Like the Englishman, he wore a small, light pack upon his shoulders, the almost universal accompaniment of foot travellers of that period. By a close inspection of the loosened top of the pack, the implements for sketching and painting that an artist might use, were visible. The stranger was fine looking, with a clear, brilliant eye, and manly forehead. He wore his beard unshaven, in the style of the period, *au naturel*, and his countenance had the olive hue that tints the skin under Italian skies. In person he was not stoutly built, and yet there was an air of strength in his well knit frame, and a spirit of decision in the lines of his mouth, that would have made you prefer him for a friend rather than an enemy in a time of emergency. His step, which is a stronger mark of spirit than most of us are aware of, was characteristic, and he walked with a free, bold air as they left the hostelry for the high road.

Such were the impressions that a casual glance would afford of the stranger.

The other was perhaps a few years older than the student, while his frame was broader at the chest, and altogether he seemed much the stronger of the two, though as we have intimated, both were of that class that it were better perhaps to count as friends. They both fell at once into that ease of manner and conversation that characterizes men of the world. Leaving the inn thus together, they turned to the forked road that ascends the hills, and with a free and steady movement pressed on their way towards Bronts.

THE MISTAKE OF A LIFE-TIME.

CHAPTER XII.—[CONTINUED.]

Ere long the road wound into the depths of the forest, along narrow paths, and even broken grounds, when the student quietly loosened his pistols, and the Englishman followed his example. It seemed to be an odd path they had taken, but the student said he knew the path very well, and that he had taken a shorter way than that commonly travelled, and they would soon discover that they had gained by this. Already had the sun set before they had got half way, and as the wood shut out what little light there was left, the travellers found themselves in comparative darkness.

Suddenly a screech thrilled across their path, so wild and piercing that the Englishman gave an involuntary start and laid his hand upon his dagger, while his companion, though taken less by surprise, seemed to listen with profound attention to the echo that rang through the forest's depths.

"In heaven's name, what sound was that?" asked the Englishman, drawing a long breath.

"An owl, I should think, and yet it was too shrill and keen for that," replied the other, bending his ear to the ground for a moment, as if to catch the last echo, which, to the Englishman's ears, sounded like an answering cry!

"No bird ever cried like that," said the Englishman, earnestly, trying at the same time to pass through the dense obscurity that now surrounded their path.

At that moment a deep, hoarse laugh rang in their ears, and seemingly uttered close behind them, so wild and unearthly in its sounds, that both paused for a moment where they stood, then hurried forward at an accelerated speed.

"What do you make of that strange noise?" asked the Englishman. "Are we beset by devils, or what strange influence is at work to terrify and bewilder us?"

"They are strange and startling," said the other, still pressing on in the darkness.

"Are they not new also to you?"

"I have heard stories of these woods being haunted," said the German, "but I have heretofore given but little faith to such matters, and yet, when we remember that it must contain so many dead bodies and fleshless skeletons of those persons the robbers have slain in these lonely paths, why is it not a

fitting place for ghosts, if any such spot there be upon the earth?" said the other.

"It is a very lonely spot, and there seems to be no end to this path."

"Have courage," said the student, "every step must lessen our distance."

"From our destination, I begin to think, for we must have lost our way here."

As he thus spoke, again was that terrific scream uttered, so shrill and near to their ears that the Englishman almost broke into a run, in his haste to hurry forward.

"By heaven, but this is very strange," said he.

"Strange, indeed," said his companion, pressing on his way,

"'Like one that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And having once turned round, walks on,
And turns no more his head;
Because he knows a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread.'

"I would some form might confront me now, of flesh and blood like ourselves, or that we might have to cut our way through a score of robbers well armed, so we could but see our danger, and not be thus saluted at every step by unearthly sounds and phantom shapes," said the Englishman, despondingly.

The cold perspiration stood upon his brow, and he seemed to feel physically that there were superhuman influences about him, while his companion appeared only bent upon getting ahead as fast as possible on their way. Suddenly as they thus hurried on, a dark body crossed their path swiftly, and so close as to rub the persons of both of the travellers, but almost instantly disappeared in the depth and intricacies of the forest; yet not until the Englishman had drawn forth and presented one of his pistols, when just as he was about to fire, the German turned one side, saying:

"Stay, are you crazy? Surely you would not waste powder and ball upon such a thing as that, would you? Do you think that all your weapons put together could harm it?"

"Indeed, indeed, I know not," said the Englishman, putting up his weapon and breathing hurriedly. "It was but the impulse of a moment. Would to God the banditti or any other human creatures would confront us. I have no fear of flesh and blood, but this is terrible—it unmans one at once."

"Let us hurry on," said the student, evidently less affected by these influences than his companion. "As I said before, every step brings us nearer to Bronts, and unless we hasten, we may be lost here entirely, for I see a storm is already gathering, and clouds are beginning to shut out what little light the stars have been yielding us."

"It grows dark very fast," said the Englishman, watching the thronging clouds overhead.

"We shall have the storm upon us directly," said the other.

This was indeed the case, and each moment the road grew less and less distinct, until the travellers became aware that they must have lost the beaten track by some means, for they were now half climbing, half stumbling over an uneven and broken path, that they could only feel their way over. Already, though of vigorous form, the Englishman breathed deep and heavily from fatigue, though doubtless the mental annoyance he had experienced had done more to produce this than the physical strength he had expended in his efforts to advance on their way.

To add to the dread and discomfort which beset them in their passage of the forest, loud peals of thunder began to startle them and to reverberate through the woods with terrific violence and ominous echoes. Now and then the vivid lightning would flash across their path, and lighting its most minute parts for a moment, reveal to them the gloomy and rocky way they trod; and then all was once more suddenly shrouded in the almost tangible darkness, so dense did it appear to them. It required a most persevering spirit to bear one up against such a combination of untoward circumstances. The student did not seem to quail much, though he showed some signs of fatigue, and grumbled at the extraordinary darkness. He seemed evidently more used to such scenes than the Englishman, who appeared almost discouraged.

"Hold," said the latter, in a voice of despair; "let us stop here, for we know not whither we are going, and may be only plunging deeper and deeper into this accursed forest. Let us stop here, I say, until the morning, or we shall spend what little strength

we have left, to no purpose but our own harm."

"Not yet, not yet," said the student, earnestly, "not yet, a little longer."

"But why? Does not the path each moment grow worse and worse?"

"True," said the other, "but twice have I seen what appeared to me to be a lamp through the darkness and the trees. I think we are approaching it fast, so let us press on at least a while longer."

"A few moments, to satisfy you, but no more," said the Englishman.

"There, see you nothing just here through these trunks?" asked the student.

"Stay, I do see something, but it is gone again; did it seem to you a light?"

"Yes, now and then obscured by some object passing before it," said the other.

Still they passed on, until at last the Englishman also distinctly saw the light referred to, and though they knew not from whence it came, whether from friend or foe, the Englishman felt strangely gladdened at heart by the sight, after the trials that they had just experienced. The rough way no longer seemed painful to accomplish, their steps were freer now, and their spirits came back again as the light grew more and more distinct before their gazing eyes, until both, in their satisfaction, began to joke at their late uneasiness and fear of unknown danger.

As they went on, the light which had guided them so far, seemed to change in appearance and shape, and now to become merged into a number of different ones, and proving it to be yet a long distance off. The truth was, that the light they had seen was the combined blaze of a number, which at a great distance seemed to be but one, but which on a nearer approach, assumed their individual distinctness. Thus encouraged, they no longer flagged, but put forth every effort to press onward, until at last they came out upon a clear, open piece of ground in the wood, and just at the base of an ascending hill or large rock, from a cave in which the light issued.

Both paused to gaze for a moment upon the scene that presented itself to their eyes.

The mouth of a large cave was before them, lighted up by hanging lanterns, and its entrance guarded by a sentinel, who leaned within the shelter upon his carbine, in a half dreamy mood. The mouth of the cavern opened immediately upon the clearing referred to, which covered some acre or more of soft green sward, a spot evidently redeemed at great labor by the hand of men, from the densest part of the forest.

At this moment the sentinel, who must have been half asleep upon his weapon, suddenly discovered them, sprang forward and levelled his carbine at them, and by the click of the lock, was evidently about to fire, when this was prevented by the student, who raised his cap, and said:

"It is well, Carli; your vigilance is commendable, but you need not fire!"

The man recovered his weapon almost as quickly as he had assumed the threatening attitude, and lifting his cap respectfully, stood on one side for the travellers to enter the cave.

"What does this mean?" asked the Englishman, turning to his companion.

"That we are to shelter here for the night," said the other, carelessly.

"But this seems to be a strong hold of robbers," said the Englishman.

"Well."

"But it is not well, that we become voluntarily prisoners here."

"There is no other resort for us now," said the other, coolly.

"It is walking into the lion's jaws, to seek for a shelter here."

"What would you do—once more attempt the forest path in the dark?"

"But you seem to be known here," said the Englishman, inquiringly.

"I am."

"And who are you?" asked the Englishman, in amazement.

"Karl Blasius!"

"The robber?" asked the other.

"Yes, if the title suits you; at all events, I am captain of this free band."

The bearing of the traveller was at once wholly changed. He assumed the authority that was most evidently his right, and the Englishman found that he was at once to consider himself a prisoner, while an under officer suggested to him that he would trouble him for his pack and such weapons as he might have in his possession.

Resistance would have been fool-hardy, and therefore the Englishman quietly submitted.

CHAPTER XIII.

LADY GUSTINE AND THE JEW.

See how the skillful lover spreads his toils. STILLINGFLEET.

It was midnight in the gay city of Bronts, and the streets shone like a star, so brightly were the windows of the nobility illuminated, while from many, soft music stole out upon the evening air, of most bewitching melody. But the reader must come with us to this lofty old pile that skirts the river's bank upon the overhanging bank or rock. It is the castle of Ghertstein, belonging to the noble family of that name, who held a prominent place on the page of history that records the times gone by in that valley.

It was one of those fine old piles of the past, the token of feudal power and wealth, such as cover the banks of the Rhine, from its rise to its mingling with the bosom of the ocean itself.

The banquetingn hall was one blaze of light and beauty, and the princely company were busy in the mazes of the giddy dance and waltz. Arms were encircling slender taper waists, and eyes fraught with tender homage were drinking from the blue depths of lovely and bewitching glances. The dazzling light cast from the gorgeous chandeliers, the glittering ornaments of the spacious rooms, the brilliant mirrors reflecting back the white arms and heaving bosoms of the owners of those bewitching eyes, all, all together seemed like some fairy picture of enchantment,—a spot where joy and regal mirth reigned supreme, and the hearts of the dancers were as light as their feet.

Now there passes by the most lovely form of all amidst this array of beauty, the fair daughter of this noble house of Ghertstein, leaning familiarly upon the arm of the noblest looking gentleman of all the goodly throng about them.

The lady herself was the last representative of a long line of ancestors, the last scion of a noble house. They seemed to the casual observer to be most happily matched, in those outward evidences that meet the eye. The lady might have seen eighteen summers, while her companion could count but little over twenty. It was not alone the sweet expressiveness of the lady's features that constituted her beauty. This gave it a gentle and intellectual cast; but the high, clear forehead, the majestic carriage, and the deep blue eyes, in perfect accordance with the expression, gave also to it a dignity and high toned beauty all its own.

Her companion had the figure of an Indian Apollo, with eyes and features that compared well with her at his side, while his bearing was no less free and dignified than the lady's, and in his every movement was written the very *tone* of command. He listened, with undisguised devotedness, to every word that fell from the lips of her by his side, and she in turn seemed to dwell with pleasure upon the full, manly, and musical tones of his voice.—They have already danced thrice together, and fatigued with the exertion, the lady now seeks the retirement of an alcove, from which there was a slight projecting balcony, overlooking the river far below. She seated herself for a moment in the soft, refreshing coolness, that swept like a gentle trade wind through the valley.

"I fear you are fatigued," said the gentleman, with tender solicitude.

"O, no," said the lady, panting to regain the breath she had expended in the waltz.

There was a pause for a moment between them, while the gentleman's eye seemed fixed upon the scene below, and his thoughts to be wandering far away from the spot.

"Mr. Stanley, your eyes seem rivetted upon the water to-night."

"Did you speak?" he asked, seeming to recall himself from some absorbing thought.

"I remarked your eyes seem rivetted upon the scene below; are you dreaming?"

"O, no, lady," he replied, striving to recover himself; "I—I was thinking how truly the passage of yonder tiny craft resembles that of our own life bark on the tide of time."

"And how?"

"See you not how quietly its hull is borne along with the current? Not even the sail is set, and the helmsman nods at his post.—There is not a ripple beneath the prow; she moves bodily with the tide itself, silently, but quickly, to the end of the river, and anon she will be in the ocean beyond."

"Well," said the lady, interested in the tone and manner, as much as in the subject of his conversation.

"Thus are we moving now, lady, rapidly, with silent, but steady, and never ceasing motion, down the swift river of time, that sets through the valley of life; all unconsciously we glide on, nodding like this same helmsman, indifferently, as we hold the rudder that guides our own fate—while we swiftly approach the ocean of eternity."

"You color highly, Mr. Stanley," said the lady, thoughtfully.

"But truthfully, I trust; have I not spoken truly, lady?"

"Doubtless," she replied, and then continued, as her mind evidently followed out the thoughts that her companion's mind had suggested. "And so you believe, Mr. Stanley, that when the river is passed, and we come at last to that ocean beyond, that it will then be a sunny sea, as yonder craft may find with the promises of this star-light night; or shall many of us meet with storms, and perhaps even be wrecked?"

"I believe that there will be no wrecks upon that sea. The high waters of life are sufficiently fraught with disasters and misery. The life to come must surely be a haven of rest. But we are getting serious, and talking of subjects that would better fit us in the cloister than the ball-room. Shall we enter again?"

"Observe you how attentive and constant this young Stanley is to our lady, the fair Gustine?" asked one of the young gentlemen of another, as the two came once more into the room from the balcony.

"Ay, he seems to share her undivided attention to-night," was the answer.

"Not much of a compliment to us," said the first speaker. "The fact is, these Englishmen come hither from London, and think to carry all things after their own taste and fashion."

"That's true; and somehow or other they generally manage to succeed."

"But who is the gentleman, do you know?" asked the first speaker. "Is he of gentle blood, or has he any marked claim upon the courtesy of such a lady as the heiress of this house?"

"I only know that he is Robert Stanley, as my lord introduced him to me, and that he brings with him good letters of introduction from high sources in England."

"It can't be denied that he's a fine looking fellow."

"Yes, but yet I don't half like his way of addressing one, it's overbearing."

"Never mind that. I speak of his good looks, at this moment, for instance as he dances with

lady Gustine. Fore heaven, but they are a noble couple."

"That is a fact, and well matched as far as looks go," said the other.

"See, they sit down again together, and now the lady smiles upon him; he has a free and ready tongue, and dwells upon the beauties of her native valley like one born in it, and speaks the language as well."

"Yes, he's a ready dog," said the other, with a jealous sneer.

"By the mass, but I envy the Englishman," continued the other, honestly. "Think you his blood is good enough to warrant such connection with the noble house of Ghertstein, as this intimacy might in the end lead to? Half the assembly think them engaged already."

"Your true Englishman feels good enough in blood for any one, though to speak honestly of yonder gallant, he comes of a knightly family, and is vastly rich withal."

"Perhaps that last clause is the secret of my lord's quiet acquiescence."

"True, I didn't think of that."

"You know the coffers of Ghertstein are not bottomless, and would well bear replenishing."

Robert Stanley was the son of an English family of high standing, and having, as his letters represented, finished his studies at home, he was now passing a couple of years in travel upon the continent, for amusement and information. Having letters, as it appeared, to many of the first families of Bronts, he had tarried here for some weeks, having free access to a circle that brought him often into the society of the lady Gustine, until the days prescribed for his stay wore away, and he found that he had already lost his heart to the fair being by his side. There seemed to be a mysterious influence prompting him, some secret regret or fear that influenced his mind, and which betrayed itself to those who watched him narrowly. But he was warmly received, and made many friends in the circle to which he had became introduced, even in the short period that he had been here.

"Dear lady," he said, "I find, now the period has arrived when I must prepare to leave this fair city, that I am tied to it by strong, yet silken bonds, so profuse is the hospitality that has greeted me on every hand, so dear and tender the associations that already cluster so thickly, and so twine themselves about my heart, in the memory of each pleasant hour that I have passed here."

"Our lovely valley seems ever to enchant your countrymen, as with a most potent spell," said the lady Gustine, smiling at the earnestness with which he spoke.

"True, lady, though not for its picturesque beauties of landscape alone, but for the fair beings who dwell on its river's banks, and under its castle's fairy halls, by their enchanting power."

"You are inclined to flattery, I think, Mr. Stanley," said the lady.

"Upon my soul, lady, I speak only the honest promptings of the heart."

The lady smiled again, half incredulously, half archly, then turned once more to the throng about her. It was very evident to a careful observer that, although the stranger was most constant and devoted to her, yet she seemed only pleased, not charmed with him. That she was interested in him, was equally evident, and also that she enjoyed the society of one so well informed, so free and original in conversation, and who appreciated so keenly the peculiar beauties of her native valley. The lady Gustine was no coquette, and yet the devoted and assiduous attention of such a man could not but minister in some degree to her pride; nor did she feel that she was sacrificing any principle of right in receiving, and perhaps slightly encouraging, those gentle attentions.

This was the true relationship that existed between him known as Robert Stanley, and the lady Gustine.

It is market-day in Bronts, the streets and squares being thronged by merchants and venders of all degrees and conditions; market-women in their gay dresses are driving hither and thither, and trading Jews and rich brokers are threading their way among the busy throng of human beings. Here are humble peasants staring with wonder stricken countenances at the profuse display of finery and gewgaws, and here trips by a pretty village girl, come to town to see all the wonders of Bronts. Loud laughter and merry jests rang out from the assembled throats, and the occasion, like that of similar meetings all over Europe, was a real gala day.

Among this motley throng of humanity, an

observant eye might have noticed two or three men, whom, had they followed, they might have noticed to be working for some extraordinary purpose in concert. One was dressed as a humble peasant of the mountains, another seemed to have driven some cattle to market, and having disposed of them, was now strolling about, whip in hand, among the crowd for his own pleasure. A third was clothed in a citizen's dress, and seemed to be a mere looker-on at this motley picture. Added to these, still another, to whom the rest seemed to pay no little deference, and indeed from whom they appeared to receive their instructions.

He was dressed in the long hanging garments and cloth cap of the Jewish costume, while a grizzly beard swept his breast; still, although age had seemingly laid its stamp upon his brow, his step was firm, and his form erect; nor did his large quick eye permit anything to escape its vision. He appeared to be one of the brokers who infest the large squares of the city on such occasions as the present, and seemed to a casual observer, to be in the quiet occupation of his trade as a money changer. But one of the three, of whom we have spoken, now approached him, as if by accident, or as though he wished to consult him upon some business relating to his calling, when he who wore the garb of a Jew, said:

"Carli."

"Captain."

"Mark yonder tradesman bending at the jeweller's stall."

"With the scarlet doublet?" asked the other, trying to make out the person referred to.

"Ay. He leaves town this afternoon, I have learned, and with a heavy purse."

"By what route, captain?"

"He must be met at the northern pass, and be relieved of his purse. You have your orders."

"I understand, captain," said the other, respectfully, "but here is a rich merchant from Aix-la-Chapelle, who is actually weighed down with doubloons and ounces. I have had my eye on him for the last hour, and was following him when I saw your signal. Perhaps I had better—"

"Obey orders!" said the other, sternly, as he turned his eye upon the man with an expression that seemed to thrill the fellow through, as he went submissively away.

Another and another joined him at intervals, who wore the Jew's garb, and received orders not dissimilar to that just related, one of them concerning the merchant from Aix-la-Chapelle, already referred to, and who had not escaped the quick, searching glances of the robber chief, for such he evidently was.—At last the Jew turned out of the square on to the high road that leads towards the mountains, and along which, with staff in hand, he pursued his way, as though seeking his home after the close of the day's business.

Scarcely had the Jew left the din and bustle of the scene we have described behind him, when looking up he discovered approaching him, and at no great distance, a party of ladies and gentlemen, who had evidently been seeking equestrian exercise among the hills and vales that border the river's course. They must pass him in the road very nearly, and he seemed to realize and dread this, for some reason best known to himself, since he plainly evinced much uneasiness of manner and nervous trepidation, while his face seemed at one time to blanch as though fear had completely chilled his blood. But on came the gallant party in high spirits; their prancing steeds showing by their impatience of the restraint they felt under the curb, the fire and mettle that coursed in their veins.

At the head of this fair company, rode the lord of Ghertstein, in all the pride of the class to which he belonged. He was a fine looking man, with a military aspect, and his gray hair gave him a rather venerable appearance, though he was but little past fifty years of age. He sat on his horse with a princely air, and like one who had been accustomed to the saddle from his youth. By her father's side, rode the fair lady Gustine, the natural hue of her cheek heightened to a glowing color by the vigor of exercise, and her eyes beaming with spirit.

As the party approached still nearer the Jew, he seemed, by an extraordinary struggle, to regain his self-possession, and to assume once more, successfully, the plodding and unconcerned air of an ordinary trader, on his way homeward after the labors of the day, and now as they dashed by his very side, he bowed humbly to the noble throng, and was soon

left far behind. And yet they did not pass him so swiftly, but that he heard the lady Gustine say to her father:

"Did you note that Jew, my lord?" at the same time turning slightly, to get a second glance at him.

"I noticed that we passed one of the race, nothing more," said the father.

"It is strange!" said the lady Gustine, half reining up her horse, and musing.

"What is strange, my child?" asked her father, regarding her closely.

"Why, that the man's eye should have struck me so particularly," she replied.

"How so, my child?" asked the lord of Ghertstein.

"They seemed so familiar to me, and to awake such undefined memories as I cannot describe," she replied, still musing absently within herself.

"Rouse up, my child, you are dreaming," said the lord of Ghertstein, smiling at the earnestness of expression that he saw depicted in his daughter's face.

"Indeed it was no dream," she replied, thoughtfully, but tapping her horse with the riding whip, he sprang into an easy hand gallop, and followed by her friends, she thus entered the town.

Of course, the Jew heard only the first words of the dialogue between the lady Gustine and her father, but that which he had overheard, seemed once more to revive his agitation of manner, and he hurried forward with accelerated speed towards the summit of the hill before him. Once or twice he turned his head to look after the receding forms of the party referred to, with a nervous air, as though he half feared they would turn and follow him, and though he still continued to meet other parties, and be overtaken by many, yet he did not heed them at all. His thoughts had evidently flown away with the party among whom rode the lady Gustine. Some strange interest seemed to relate to them, as it regarded himself.

Having reached the height of the nearest elevation, he seemed to single out the party on the river road, as it wound on its way up to the crag on which stood the ancient castle of Gherlstein, nor did he move from the spot until he had seen the cortége wind its way beneath the lofty portals of the old gate.

Lost in reverie, the Jew hastened forward, heeding nothing that passed him, until he came to a fork of the road, where he turned to the lower or river route, as though he would follow it, but soon after he struck into the woods, and was at once lost in the paths of the thick forest.

Between the time that the Jew had lost sight of the party referred to, and that when he once more discovered them winding up the craggy ascent, they had paused in the market-place of the city, to see the graceful but grotesque dance of a tamborine girl, accompanied by one who seemed to be a blind fiddler.—The girl was quite young, and presented the very picture of good health and rural beauty. Her deep blue eyes were full of light heartedness; her cheeks were like the rose itself in color, and her childlike figure was light and well formed. The child saw the party pause to note her, and turning her steps towards them, as also had her friend, the musician, who soon commenced to play, while the girl danced to the united music of his instrument and the ringing notes of her tamborine, hung with tiny brass bells.

"By our lady, but the child dances well," said the lord of Ghertstein.

"Charmingly," said Gustine, making a sign for her to approach, as she closed her dance, and as she did so, tossing a piece of gold into her extended tamborine.

"Is he thou leadest thy father?" asked the lady.

"Only an humble friend," replied the girl, courtseying.

"Is he blind?"

The girl bowed an assent.

Amid a cheer from the crowd, the party dashed off through the town.

Had the lady Gustine scrutinized him whom the girl pretended to lead as a blind man, she could have discovered that his sight was as quick and faithful as her own, and that the blindness was but a feint to some object even beyond that of the small sums that charitable persons might thus be induced to give. As night drew on, both the girl and the musician turned their steps away from the market-place, and passed out upon the high road together, taking the same route that the Jew had pursued, even after they entered the shades of the forest.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BANDIT'S STORY.

Why did she love him?—curious fool, be still!
Is human love the growth of human will?
To her he might be gentleness! BYRON.

THE reader must return with us to the robber's cave in the forest where we left the Englishman, after his long and fearful passage over the broken and mysterious route. He was not one to look on the dark side of any subject, and finding that he was treated as a prisoner, and that no remonstrance was of any avail, like a true philosopher, he strove to make himself as comfortable under the circumstances as was possible. At the time when we would introduce the reader to the cave, he sat near its mouth just inside the sentinel who guarded the entrance with a loaded carbine.

"Your country is full of story and romance," said the Englisman to the sentinel.

"Yes, Mein Herr," replied the robber, "there's not even a child in the whole land but has its head crammed with tales and old legends of the valley. Did you notice, for instance, the old ruined tower in the middle of the river upon a little island, not far above Bronts?"

"I saw it four weeks since, when I passed over the road," said the Englishman, "but it was evening, and I had only the twilight to aid my view. But what of the oldpile?"

"It is called Butha's town," continued the robber. "If you have a fancy that way, I'll tell you its story."

"Nothing would suit me better, just now," replied the prisoner.

The sentinel who was then on duty, was the same who had held that post when the Englishman first entered the cave. His name was Carli, and his own story, as told to the prisoner one day, was fraught with romance. He possessed a very good education, and until some five-and-twenty years of his life had passed, was the universal favorite of a brilliant circle of friends. But in an unlucky moment he outraged the laws by a sudden act of violence, and from that time became an outcast, and for the sake of self-preservation joined the banditti. The Englishman could discern by his language and manner that he had been born and bred a gentleman, and that there were many noble traits that but slumbered in his bosom.

Carli seated himself on a rough bench, and crossing his limbs over his carbine, began:

"A long time since," commenced Carli, "there was a famous noble chief known by the name of Plaitzer the bold. He was still quite a young man when the fame of his exploits filled all the country round about his rendezvous. It was said that he came of a gentle

family, and that some deed of wrong drove him forth into the wilderness to despoil those who had despoiled him before. I do not recollect now what it was, but it was some act of cruelty which turns men's blood to flame; for those were days when no law was acknowledged but castle law, and the might of the sword's blow. But Plaitzer had a noble disposition, and scorned petty game, aiming chiefly at the nobles, whom he hated. It was but rarely that he meddled with peaceable burghers or single travellers; and then only when his men were hard pressed for means, and were perhaps getting a little refractory.

"Plaitzer's quarters were mostly in the forest that skirts the river some leagues above here, and latterly it was seldom that he ventured his band towards the river's banks, for his name and person, together with those of his troops, had got to be so noted, and the chain of communication between the chieftains, whose castles overlooked the Rhine, was so complete, that the band of robbers dreaded to make themselves too conspicuous by venturing forth unduly.

"The Lord of Eiswaldt was, doubtless, well assured of the safety of his own neighborhood, and therefore thought of no danger when suffering his daughter, the fair Butha, to set out with a small escort for the burgher town of Ransfeld, about a league distant from his castle gates. The route, after leaving the castle's height, was mostly over a regular declivity, with hardly a tree to break the prospect, but midway from the castle to the town, the road sank into a slight hollow, and rising again from thence continued without further variety to its termination. It was in this hollow that the company that formed Butha's escort were attacked by a party of Plaitzer's band. The craven guard dispersed in every direction, with the exception of a few who were made prisoners by the robbers. Plaitzer, who had been engaged in another quarter, came up with the rest of the band just as the robbers were about to despoil the terrified maiden of her jewels.

"'Hold, villains!' shouted the enraged chieftain, in a voice of thunder. 'Have I not charged you not to meddle with the poor, nor with helpless women? Desist or die!'

"The terrified ruffians recoiled, and Plaitzer approaching the trembling girl, addressed her in courteous speech, entreating her to cast away all fear, and restoring the jewels of which she had been robbed, ad

"'Fair lady, neither thy name nor the fame of thy beauty is unknown to me, yet these are not needed to protect thee from danger at my hands. I, myself, will guard them till within sight of thy father's halls, and thy servants, too, cowards though they have proved themselves, shall accompany us on the way.'

"As he had said, so he performed, and accompanied the lady Butha to her father's halls, and as he turned to leave her, his expressive face told how gladly he would have tarried longer. As he left her he said:

"'Think not, gentle lady, that men, such as myself, choose a robber's life from love of lawlessness and vice. No, full oft it is that cruel and stinging wrongs drive us to the paths we lead. Then, lady, pity us and our sad fate.'

"The robber chief was about to depart, when a gesture from the lady arrested his attention. Trembling with modest agitation, she unloosed a golden clasp from her arm and placed it in the hand of Plaitzer, saying:

"'Take this as a token of my gratitude, and O, Sir Knight, for such you deserve to be, if such you are not, I entreat thee to draw away from this unlawful life. Go, and heed the words of a timid but grateful daughter of the Rhine.'

"With tears in her dark, earnest eyes, the lady Butha turned away, while Plaitzer, overcome by a strong inward impulse, spurred his horse and dashed down the hill side. Like the barbed arrow, whose brightly glittering point but pierces the deeper for its keen brilliancy, the words of the lady fastened within the breast of the chief of the robbers, awaking all the bitter feelings of his soul. He looked upon the clasp and sighed.

"'Ah, lady, would that a kind heaven might lend me opportunity to retrieve the dark taint which clings to my name, then perchance I might be deemed worthy to wear thy valued gift.'

"The stars looked with pitying eyes upon the penitence of the noble chief, and soon brought him the opportunity that he so much coveted. The burgher towns, and travellers on the Rhine, had been long oppressed by certain haughty nobles, who exacted heavy tribute and committed acts of grievous tyranny. To such a height did this cruelty at last arise,

that the once submissive burghers rose in wrath and claimed the ready aid of the lord of Eiswaldt and Bergen, who had long been their steady friends. Eiswaldt, himself, was chosen leader of the burgher confederacy, and gladly did he accept the proffered assistance of Plaitzer and such of his band as could follow him.

"Eiswaldt, resolving if possible to be beforehand with the enemy, set forth with Plaitzer and a body of knights and troopers to surprise the stronghold of Ertezen, belonging to the league of the tyrannical nobles. But the purpose of their march was anticipated; they were met by superior numbers near Grunthalz mountain, and were driven back in confusion, for the burghers were unused to cope with well trained soldiers, and Eiswaldt and Plaitzer threw themselves into the castle of the former, where they were at once besieged. For three days the castle held out against every effort that was brought against it, but on the third eve a low-born churl, actuated both by fear and by hope of rich reward, stole secretly forth from the castle, and stipulated for a certain sum of money to show an entrance into the fortress. The proposal was accepted, and the traitor led the way to a ladder which he had let fall along the face of the precipice, which sheered perpendicularly down from the castle wall.

"Soon a wild uproar arose within the walls of castle Eiswaldt. The walls re-echoed with all the terrors of a stormed fortress. The defenders, borne down by overwhelming numbers, craved no mercy, and the brave knight of Eiswaldt was cut down before the eyes of his daughter, who, rushing from the horrid sight, threw herself from the precipice which overhung the river, finding a refuge beneath the deep waters of the Rhine from her ruthless pursuers, who shrunk back in horror from the sight of such a sacrifice.

"Baron Sinvern, who was the leader of the assailants, ordered the castle to be set on fire, and the victorious party retired, bearing with them, as prisoner, the person of young Plaitzer, sadly wounded. On arriving at the castle of the Baron, he was thrown into a deep dungeon, where he long languished in utter obscurity, until a retainer of the baron's, who had once received a favor from the prisoner when he was commander of his old band, succeeded in setting him free. Once more at liberty, he visited, in disguise, the town of Ransfeld, where he now for the first time learned the fate of Butha. Buried in despair, he then realized how strongly her image was implanted in his bosom, and in the depth of his sorrow, he made a vow to travel to the Holy Land and there to fight the Turks in behalf of sacred Jerusalem.

"Wearily he journeyed thither, and on the fields of Palestine joined the veteran ranks of Richard of England. Bravely he fought the Saracen, and on the blood-stained plains of Ascalon, received from the hands of Cœur de Lion, the order of the Sepulchre, which none but the well-tried crusader might bear.

"At last with an ever aching heart Plaitzer, Knight of the Sable Plume, turned his face once more towards his native valley, there to relinquish his sorrow and his life together. War-worn and sad he journeyed through Hungary, accompanied only by a faithful page, and at nightfall of a summer's day, reached the towers of an old chieftain whose son had but lately returned from Palestine. Most welcome was the weary knight to the hospitality of the Hungarian. Here he remained for a few days to recruit his exhausted strength, in the company of the young soldier, his father, and the beautiful Ada, the old man's daughter and his pride. In her sweet company the knight for awhile forgot his grief and pains, and listened joyfully to the soft music of her songs, so soothing to his restless soul.

"It was in vain for the gentle Ada to disguise the interest that the noble knight had created in her bosom, and when he left them, impelled as he said by duty, she looked the feelings her tongue might not utter, and watched his nodding plume until it was out of sight.

"The knight soon after arrived in sight of his native valley, and once more beheld the old familiar hills and the scenes which in his absence had changed so little. But, alas! the soul of the wanderer was changed indeed; dark as the discolored walls that crowned the heights of Eiswaldt, the heart of Plaitzer reflected not the rays of peace and cheerfulness that shone around him. Yet feeling that life was destined for use and action, he struggled stoutly against the griefs that preyed upon his mind.

"The burghers having invoked the protection of the emperor, and bought the patronage of

counts and barons, had finally succeeded in throwing off the yoke imposed by a league of insatiate nobles. Plaitzer, on his return, was besought to add the influence of his name and presence in protecting the rights of liberty. Pleased at the suggestion, and determined to fix his abode in the neighborhood consecrated by Butha's death, he built upon an island in the middle of the Rhine a strong and lofty tower, to which he gave the name of the loved and lost maiden. There he lived in solitude except the companionship of his trusty and faithful page.

"'Wilhelm,' he said one day, 'are thy harp strings all untuned.'

"'Nay, my dear master, it is long since I sang to thee, wilt listen to me now?'

"'Yes, boy, sing to me.'

"The youth bent o'er the instrument as he adjusted its strings, and then brushing back the dark locks from his forehead, burst forth with a full, deep voice, singing the following lyric:

THE PAGE'S SONG.

Awake, Sir Knight: the trumpet sounds,
Its summons calls away:
Why lettest thou thine armor rust,
Thine heart so brave decay?

O, there are deeds for brave men's will,
And laurels fair to win:
And he who heeds not blood to spill,
Should love the battle's din.

Then speed ye to the distant fields,
Where kings and nobles all
Strike for the prize of valiant meed,
Upon the plains of Gaul.

O, 'tis a sight to stir the blood,
And flame the forehead's flush—
Yon battle's wild and glorious flood,
Yon lancer's furious rush.

Up, then! who sit in silent trance,
Or slumber in your halls,
Spring up; and seize the martial lance,
Nor rest when glory calls!

Then up, sir knight! the trumpet sounds,
Its larum bids away!
Why lettest thou thine armor rust,
Thy strength and heart decay?

"The page paused and cast a stealthy glance at his master, whose countenance was flushed and sternly knit, and then carelessly and as if not observing the emotion depicted there, the boy said:

"'It is a song which I heard a damsel sing the other day, as she was washing linen by the river side. I *believe* it is part of an old ballad, but of that I am not sure.'

"The knight cast on the boy a piercing glance, but his countenance relaxed as a smile dispelled the cloud which had gathered over his features, as he replied:

"'Many thanks, Wilhelm, for the lesson thy song doth teach me; but I fancy that thine *own* head has done much towards furnishing the material of the verses. Yet their precepts are a little ill-timed.'

"A short silence ensued, for Wilhelm was too much abashed at the reception of his song and the failure of its innocent purpose, to offer any answer to his master.

"'Look, Wilhelm,' resumed the knight, as going to a window of the castle which commanded a view eastward, he directed the eyes of the page to the undulating horizon. 'Yonder lies my path; to the land of Palestine once more, but not as the steel-clad warrior to fight for the cross and scale the walls of the Moslem. No, for the glorious victory has been won, and the flag of the crusader waves over the towers of Jerusalem. I go *now* with the pilgrim's staff and scallop shell, to bend in penitence at the foot of the sepulchre. I give my castle to thy charge; if I return no more it is thine own, and thy service is none too well repaid. Open my coffers to the poor, and give them freely of the treasures you find there. Nay, stay thy remonstrance, my will is fixed, Wilhelm.'

"And so the knight was once more an exile from the scenes of Fatherland. Days and nights fled on, mountain-pass and valley-depth were trodden, murmuring streams and rushing rivers were passed over, yet no rest came to the feet of the pilgrim save from the slumber which nature demanded, until again at set of sun, the wanderer paused by the rude way stone, from whence was again to be seen the towers of the Hungarian, whose hospitable roof had sheltered the knight when returning from Holy-Land. An honest peasant rested from his burthen, then beside the stone, and to him the knight addressed his inquiries concerning those he remembered so well beneath yonder roof.

"'Can'st tell me, friend, concerning the welfare of those who dwell in yonder castle? I

am, as thou seest, a pilgrim bound to Holy-Land; but as once I found good shelter there, I feel no little solicitude for its inmates.'

"'Good palmer,' the peasant answered, 'the baron of yonder castle is my own lord, and a most kindly one beside; all is well with them, but the old baron sadly mourns the loss of his daughter, Ada.'

"'The beautiful Ada dead?' said the palmer, with a deep sigh.

"'Even so. Ah! she *was* beautiful as the rising morn, but grief will eat out the life from these flowers of loveliness, and so when heart-sickness finds no relief they fade and perish.'

"'Thou speakest in riddles, fellow,' said Plaitzer, almost fiercely, for an undefined fear seemed to thrill through his veins.

"'Then thou knowest not the story?' said the peasant, earnestly.

"'Not I.'

"'Listen then, and I will tell thee: There came hither, not long since, a knight, returning from Palestine shore; he had wrought many mighty deeds of valor, and he was hospitably received by the old baron and his daughter. Here the knight remained for a while and sweetly passed the time with them. The stranger and the baron's son, who had also been a soldier of the cross, oft recounted their adventurous experience, and Ada, gentle and artless, drank in the words and the kind speeches of the knight. Thus she gave her heart's love to him, and when the cruel and capricious stranger discovered that he was master of her affections, he left the fair Ada to die of a broken heart and—'

"'Villain,' shouted the incensed palmer, 'thou liest in thy mouth!' But checking himself he turned away and hastily pursued his path.

"'I was wrong,' he ejaculated, 'the peasant doubtless has believed the story which he uttered. Ada, Ada, would I had slept in death ere I had been the cause of unhappiness to thee.'

"Soon leaving the road upon his right, the palmer entered the grove below the baronial towers, directing his steps towards an opening where he had last bade farewell to the hospitable family. And now how sad were the reflections that crowded upon his mind as he recalled the pensive countenance of the fair girl as she bade him a last adieu. It was a sweet retreat, that sylvan bower where he had separated from the hospitable Hungarians, and its glossy carpet of green was studded with golden and azure flowers, which, nestling amid its emerald vines, filled the air with fragrance. The palmer approached the well-remembered place, but started with trembling limbs as he marked a marble monument that stood in the centre of the open space, and saw upon its top the garland of affectionate remembrance. He wept as he read the inscription upon the stone—

"OUR ADA."

"The palmer knelt and pressed his brow against the cold stone, and with clasped hands prayed for the spirit of the departed. For a moment he even forgot his own long home and hopeless sorrow, in grief for her who slept beneath.

"The shadows of eve had already gathered round, and anxious to pursue his journey, the pilgrim knight reverentially rose, when lo! to his astonished eyes the dim light revealed the lineaments of what he felt to be an unearthly shape, whose form was clad in robes of flowing white. Though struck with awe, he addressed the vision:

"'Fair Ada, dost thou come to chide me from the grave. Alas! gentle spirit, I never meant thee harm, for while thankful for thy kindness, thy gentle smiles, my wounded spirit wept, O, how bitterly for another."

A sudden shriek pierced the stillness, and the white form as it fell forward was received in the arms of the knight. He staggered back for a moment as he felt the weight of living reality, and parted the hair from the pale forehead of the stranger, and then with strange, uncontrollable emotion, he exclaimed:

"'It is Butha! my long lost, long loved Butha. What miracle is this?'

"Cold water from the brook hard by served to revive the fainting form of the lady, and the first transports of joy were soon followed by a calmer happiness. It was then that the mystery was solved, relating to her appearance.

"When, as we have seen, Butha rushed forth from the tower of Eiswaldt and threw herself from the precipice which overhangs the Rhine, she sunk down into an under current, formed by one of the many eddies which occur near

the river's bank, which swept her away from the spot and brought her again to the surface. Here she was rescued by a craft that was bound up the river. In this vessel, under protection of a military escort, was an old nobleman who was journeying up the Rhine to his own country after completing a foreign mission. On hearing her story, after she had recovered, the nobleman persuaded her to seek the protection of his Hungarian barony.

"Days and weeks passed by, and Butha found a happy home. Many months had elapsed when a brother of the venerable nobleman visited the castle of Koval. The stranger chief soon heard from his brother's lips the story of Butha's misfortune, whose charms were now heightened by a sweet melancholy which added a softened attraction to her fair face. The lord of Saravost looked kindly upon the lovely daughter of the Rhine, and his imagination traced in her features a resemblance to his own gentle Ada. A few days after he said to Butha:

"'My child, I have a great favor to ask of thee. I have an only daughter, a year younger than thyself, who is pining for a companion like yourself, who would be a sister to her.—She grows paler and weaker each day; perchance thy company may tend to relieve her spirits and cheer her. Go with me, and thou shalt be to me as mine own child.'

"'Alas, my lord, I have such sorrows of my own that I should be a sorry companion for one like your gentle child,' replied Butha.

"'Nay, for that very reason, if for no other, you are most fitted to the purpose, since each may console and cheer the other,' replied the nobleman.

"'My kind friends here have all the disposal of me. I will take their advice, even though it be to leave them,' she replied, sadly.

"'What say you, brother, will you not join me in urging our young friend to come with me and befriend poor Ada, who is so melancholy?'

"'She is free to go or stay,' said the lord of Koval; 'full well she knows, brother, how dearly we regard her presence here in our castle, and how gladly we would have her stay.'

"'Then, my gentle Butha, we have his consent, provided you are yourself willing. Will you not go then, and if you become weary, I will myself return with you to Koval?'

"'Well, my lord, since you urge me so much, I will go with you, though much I fear one heart so sad as mine will add no joy to your household.'

"'Thank you, thank you, my gentle Butha, no fear but we shall rejoice at the change, and we will strive to make you happy,' said her new friend.

"Thus besought, she consented, and soon after became domesticated as the companion of Ada. Butha attempted to dispel the dejection which Ada strove, but in vain, to conceal. But all her efforts were vain, and she soon found that some secret grief preyed upon the mind of the gentle girl. Gradually, Butha came to suspect the nature of that grief, and at length, influenced by her tender solicitude, Ada told her all. Struggling against the inward emotion that she experienced, Butha strove to console her young friend, but the latter failed away day by day, and at last sank to sleep forever.

"As the fair young girl died, she solicited from her father the promise that he would adopt Butha in her place, and this promise so freely given, was as truly kept. Butha ever kept fresh the flowers which graced the fair Ada's grave, and the eve she had met with the lone palmer, she had come to strew it with fragrant buds.

"But who shall paint the happiness of Butha and the knight of the cross, now that they had met again? The holy ties of matrimony made them one, in the rural chapel of Seravost, and soon after, Butha's tower on the river island, received its lord, the Knight of the Sable Plume, and his fearless bride, whose name the castle bore."

"'Well told, good Carli,' said the prisoner 'thou art a true son of the Rhine.'

CHAPTER XV.

THE STRATAGEM.

Ho, treachery! my guards, my scimitar! BYRON.

ROBERT STANLEY was still a welcome and favored guest at the castle of Ghertstein, and indeed seemed to many a jealous aspirant for the fair lady Gustine's hand, to grow in favor with both parent and child, and in proportion to the amount of courtesy thus extended to him, were the ire and jealousy of those who followed in the lady's train moved. In this state of affairs young Stanley began to realize that he was constantly and most closely watched, in order that some cause of open disagreement might be found against him, whereby his enemies would be enabled to avow their feelings, and hence perhaps by some cunning trick, ensnarl him in some most unpleasant dilemma. Realizing these facts, and fearing apparently that the impetuosity of his disposition might in a hasty moment lead him to do some deed that he should have occasion to regret, he resolved to press his suit warmly, and if possible, to win at once the hand and love of the peerless Gustine.

It was about this period one evening, as the young Englishman was approaching the castle, actuated by the purpose to which we have just referred, that he met two of the gentlemen who were most conspicuous in their attendance on the fair lady Gustine. He was on his way from the town, and had already nearly ascended the cliff on which the castle stood, when the two persons met him. They were evidently awaiting his coming, and as he drew still nearer to them, which he was compelled to do in pursuing his path, they uttered some sneering remark relating to the country to which he was supposed to belong. But absorbed with the intention that governed him so strongly, he hardly noticed their speech, and bowing in a dignified manner, he passed on. But the insult was repeated, and with such marked intent that he could no longer pretend to be indifferent to it, and turning toward them with a fire in his eye that they had never seen there before, said with cool irony:

"Gentlemen, you seem by some chance to have chosen a somewhat remarkable time, place and subject, for diverting yourselves. It is useless to deny that your words were meant for me."

"We deny nothing," said both, confidently; the elder, a man of some eight and thirty, all the while playing with the silken sword knot that was attached to his weapon.

"You acknowledge that you wished to insult me," continued the Englishman.

"You are a good interpreter to understand so well," replied the elder of the two.

"Fools!" said their intended victim, irritated to the utmost sufferance.

"Fools?" repeated both, in amazement.

"Ay, both of ye, fools and cowards!"

As he uttered the last words, his rapier sprang from its scabbard, and with its flat side he struck them both a blow across the breast, so quick and stoutly as to stagger them, and almost to bring them to the ground. This was the signal for a grand meleè, and in an instant after, their swords were striking fire in the dim hazy twilight of the hour.

But the two who had thus provoked the attack, had not counted upon the skill of their successful rival, for although themselves by no means indifferent swordsmen, yet they could not touch him with the points of their weapons, so keen was his eye, and so subtle his fence. Already their faces were blackened with the excitement of their passion and disappointment, when, with a boldness and dexterity that astounded and confused them, he who bore the name of Stanley dashed at them, and by *coup-de-main* disarmed them both, casting their swords far over the cliff into the very bed of the Rhine, where they sank to be seen no more. The two men who had thus set upon the other single one, now looked crest-fallen and ashamed, for he spared their lives so completely at his mercy.

"Your luck has served you well," said the spokesman of the two, "but we shall meet again when skill will be called into requisition; this affair does not end here."

"*When* you please, *where* you please, and with *what* you please," said the Englishman, coolly.

"Your confidence serves you well," continued the other, "but we shall humble you."

"At present you have evidently counted without your host, gentlemen," he replied, coolly, as he now returned his own weapon to the scabbard. "You had best retire and consider your folly in secret."

"We will see you again."

"At your own pleasure," added the Englishman, quite indifferently.

And with a muttered curse from the discomfited party, they separated.

More than ever impressed with the importance of bringing his suit to an immediate issue, the more successful follower of the lady Gustine resolved that he would, if possible, make some appointment with her that very evening, in which they alone might participate, and then if his fortune still favored him, he would openly declare his love, and strive to win from her a promise of her hand and heart. With this intent, he approached the castle, and being announced, was received with the cordial welcome that had ever greeted him in the halls of Ghertstein.

He found the lady alone, and engaged in reading one of those German legends with which the few books of that period were filled. She received him with marked kindness and consideration, but you would have looked in vain for any token of love on her part. There was no such language in the depth of her large, blue eyes, though their expression of pleasure in his society was unmistakable. She spoke of the story she was reading; it was one of those wild and romantic legends of the upper Rhine, and he listened with most respectful attention. And then her companion related another, which showed him to be as familiar with the beautiful valley as herself, and to know its wild and romantic story of cliff or ruined tower, like one who had been born upon the river's banks.

He told her of the ruined tower of Corbetz, and the story of the unhappy spirit of a fair young girl that was said still to linger about its mossy aisles and decayed courts. He invested all with such a soft hue of romance, that he found the lady Gustine a willing listener.

"You speak like one whose days have been passed upon the spots you describe."

"One could hardly inhabit your lovely valley, even temporarily, without imbibing its spirit of romance."

"You have been an apt sojourner among us, Mr. Stanley, so soon to have drunk in the spirit."

"There are many of these legends and stories that I have treasured in memory, but doubtless they are all familiar to you, lady, who are native here, in this fair valley."

"But I never tire of listening to them," she replied; "they please me much."

"There was one that interested me much, and which for its locale had this very neighborhood."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, shall I tell it to you?"

"Do so."

And then in a low and gentle voice he told her how a noble lady of the neighboring val-

ley, while she was yet but a mere girl, had seen a youth remarkable for his grace and beauty. That as years passed on, they often met, the lady caring not for the humble estate of the youth, for he was hardly more than a peasant. This his dress at once betrayed, but preferring love to power, she gave no weight to the chance that had given him birth in a humbler station than herself, but sacrificed her pride to her love, and freely gave her heart to him who had wooed her in secret. At last, having prepared a modest and humble home in the forest for this tender flower which had been nursed and reared in lavish luxuriance, he came one night, and meeting her by appointment at the castle gate, they fled from her father's halls.

But alas! for her true love, she found that her husband, though young and handsome, tender of heart as a child to her, and gentle by nature to all, was yet the leader of a powerful fraternity of banditti. But her woman heart was true to the last, and she followed his fortunes, though they were often of the severest character, and faithful were they to each other, until finally the law claimed its victim, when he was taken, condemned, and executed with many of his comrades. Then it was that the young wife, with her little boy, after suffering and privation had overcome her sense of pride, returned to her father's gates, not to beg of him to reinstate her to the honored place she had once filled at his fireside; no, she did not aspire to this, but she humbly begged for charity, for the bare means of supporting life within herself and her little son. But her proud father's heart was made of iron, and the young mother was rudely driven from his door, to perish of misery and want.

While the narrator spoke thus, he grew so animated and earnest that his cheek was flushed, his speech quick, and his eye almost wild with excitement. Indeed, he seemed to have forgotten himself in the interest he evinced, and the lady too showed no trifling degree of emotion.

"And the child?" suggested the lady Gustine, "what became of him?"

"What should you think, lady, would probably be the after life of that boy?"

"Indeed, I cannot divine," she answered, evidently ill at ease about some sad thought.

"I will tell you. He grew up, determined to avenge himself, first upon the laws for his father's death, and then upon the proud nobility of the land for his mother's suffering."

"This is a strange story to tell me, Mr. Stanley," said the lady, somewhat markedly.

"And why stranger than if I had chosen any other story of the valley?" he asked.

"Because it relates to my own cousin, the lord Blasius, and his sister, who unfortunately as you have related, became the wife of the far-famed and unprincipled *Schinderhanes*."

"Is it possible that I have been so unfortunate as to refer, though inadvertently, to any matter that is unpleasant to you? If so, I can only plead my ignorance, and ask your forgiveness, lady."

"You have it most cordially," she replied, smiling upon him as she spoke.

"Thank you, lady; far be it from me to render one moment of your life unhappy."

"It matters not, Mr. Stanley, and if I appeared for a moment moved, it was only at the eloquence yourself displayed, and the interest you seemed to experience in the story as you told it."

"Nay, I had noted it only as other legends that I have listened to of your valley," he replied.

"This son of Julia Blasius," continued the lady, "was named Karl, and as you have said, became like his father an outlaw, still defying the authorities of the valley, with a well organized band."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, and report speaks much of his singular and eccentric character."

"There is an old tower on the main road that leads from Bronts towards the north,' said her companion, "some league or thereabouts from here, of which I have heard a very curious story, and from a source also that I am inclined most fully to credit. I thought it so remarkable and characteristic, and was so impressed with the details of the story, that I have visited and explored the spot since I have been here, carefully examining the localities upon which it largely depends for its interest. The legend when listened to upon the spot, becomes so impressive that no candid mind can doubt its truth—though it is by far the most romantic in its character of any I have yet heard in the Rhine valley. Do you know the ruins I refer to?"

"On the main road from Bronts towards the north?" asked the lady.

"Yes."

"I do not, and yet I am familiar with that road. Is it isolated, or on some prominent point?"

"Situated a little off the main road, on a forest path, that leads to a gentle ascent."

"It is singular that I have never heard of the ruins, and yet have been so near to them."

"They are not set down in our maps, and indeed, I found them but little known, lying as they do off the main road, at the inner edge of the forest, where it crowns the hills."

"I should like above all things to see the tower, and hear you relate the story."

"Nothing would delight me more than to visit the spot with you, lady Gustine, and as I shall be obliged to depart for the south on the day after to-morrow, might we not do so on the coming afternoon?"

"O, yes, if it be safe in that neighborhood," she replied.

"It is the most quiet portion of the country for leagues about."

"I will order my horse early then, that we may get home in time from the ruins to greet my father, who will be returning at the close of the day from a business trip to the upper valley."

"I shall be quite at your service, lady, as to time," replied her companion.

On the day following the meeting just described, a little after meridian, the two, mounted on superb chargers, dashed spiritedly through the town of Bronts and took the high road that led towards the mountains. A hundred eyes were turned to admire the splendid horsemanship of the gentleman, who strode a coal black steed of wondrous power and beauty of action, while the lady's milk-white charger was no less completely in her command. They were a noble looking pair, and elicited many an earnest compliment of admiration as they passed the throng of people.

If the fair lady Gustine had thought her new friend entertaining before, when he had so amused her within her father's halls, she now thought him eloquence itself. Not a natural beauty escaped his quick, observant eye, nor a curious spot his remark, while he seemed to know the beauties of the country like one who had studied them with both a poet's and a painter's eye. So agreeable indeed did he prove, that the lady Gustine had not once recalled the object of their excursion, though they had already left Bronts fully a league or more behind them, and still they sped on, while her companion, seemingly in unwonted good spirits, absorbed and entertained her thoughts.

At last they approached a road that seemed to be but little used, and though it might afford comfortable passage for equestrians, was yet hardly accessible for a vehicle of any kind. Here they turned off the main road, when for a moment the lady's attention was called to the route they were pursuing, and she said:

"A league, Mr. Stanley, why this must be nearly two from Bronts?"

"Do you feel fatigued, lady?" he rejoined, with evident interest.

"O, no," she replied, "but we must calculate accordingly for the distance, in our hour for returning."

Bu both seemed to be in the highest spirits, and still chatting, they dashed on through the winding forest path, it could hardly be called a road, until it was deemed high time for them to have found the ruined tower, and at last it was concluded that by some chance, they must have passed the path that led to it, or have taken the wrong road when they first entered the forest. Yet her companion was so positive that this was the route he had so lately travelled, that they resolved to keep on still a little longer, fully to satisfy themselves. And thus they continued on for some time longer, until at last they came to a small open plat of ground, of a circular form, around which they rode, endeavoring to find some outlet that might lead towards the ruins which they sought. From this circular plat there opened two forest paths, the one by which they had entered, and one opposite, which led deeper into the wood. Either by accident or purpose, when they left the circular plat, although ostensibly for the purpose of returning, having already abandoned as useless their purpose of seeking the ruined tower, they took the wrong road.

"We must ride with a free rein," said the lady, "for already the sun is declining."

"We have exhausted much time unwittingly," said her companion, "in this fruitless search."

"My father I fear will chide this imprudence," said the lady Gustine, seeming to realize for the first time that she was alone in the deep wood, with one who was a comparative stranger to her.

"It is I who am to blame, lady, for attempting to play the guide when I knew so little about the road."

"Let us on now, and make up for lost time," said the lady, touching her horse with the whip.

The lady Gustine was perfect mistress of the *menage*, and tired not, while her companion accommodated himself to her mood, riding slow or fast as she chose, with that indifferent ease that showed him long used to the saddle. But now it began to grow dark, and the twilight hour was clothing nature in its dreamy hues. Long shadows were already cast across the paths, and still they seemed to be plunging deeper and deeper into the forest, rather than pursuing a path that would finally bring them to the highway again. Though the lady expressed no fear, yet it was evident that she was exercised by no slight degree of uneasiness as she became at last convinced that this was perhaps the case, and now for the first time heeded with a careless ear the converse of her loquacious companion. She hurried forward her horse, as though she hoped to obtain some light ere long as to their position, while her companion pleaded his ignorance of the character of the country paths and by-roads, but still seemed inclined to press forward, which they did until it became quite dark. When suddenly the lady Gustine drew up her horse, and said in a spirit almost of despair:

"Indeed, this is very, very unfortunate, Mr. Stanley; how will it end?"

"I regret it deeply for your sake," replied her companion, "but we will hope for the best."

"How could we have been so thoughtless and careless as to get lost here?"

"I fear that I am wholly to blame, for I have led you here."

"And these woods, too, Mr. Stanley," said the lady, with a shudder, "are not unfrequently infested by robbers. Alas! I feel as though I should drop from my horse with fright."

"I assure you there is no cause for alarm, lady," said her companion; "come what may, you are safe from all harm. You may rely upon my words."

"You speak confidently, Mr. Stanley," said the lady, somewhat surprised.

"If I speak confidently, it is the more successfully to assure you, lady, but still you may rely upon my words."

The singular calmness of her companion under the exciting circumstances, and a peculiar manner that seemed to have suddenly crept over him, also became a cause of suspicion to the lady Gustine, and she felt like one certainly deserted and surrounded by myriads of undefined dangers. She now realized how imprudent she had been to leave home thus unattended, and her heart sank within her with regret and fear. Naturally of a nervous temperament, her strength now began to fail her, and though she struggled hard for mastery, her physical powers were not equal to her mental resolve; and declaring that she could sit on her horse no longer, her companion sprang to the ground only in time to receive her fainting form in his arms, and gently to lay her upon the green sward and moss of the forest, pale as death itself, and now quite insensible to anything about her. He paused for a moment as she lay there so pale, yet so beautiful, to note by the dim light the extraordinary loveliness that presented itself to his gaze. Within the last half hour his manner had changed in a marked degree. There was a bolder and freer air in his bearing, and he looked about him like one who felt at home, not like a person who had lost his way in the forest. He was no longer the effeminate and gentle suitor who had frequented the halls of Ghertstein; there was a proud defiance in his eye, and a self-reliance in every action, that bespoke him to be a man accustomed to bold and ready action.

He paused only for a moment, as he bent over the lifeless form of the lady Gustine, then drawing from his breast a small silver call, he uttered a shrill rolling note that was answered in a moment after before the echoes had died way among the aisles of the forest. Before the lady had fairly recovered her senses, six horsemen dashed up to the scene,

armed *cap-a-pie* in the costume of Italian banditti.

"Carli," said the lady's companion, to the foremost of the party.

"Captain," said the robber, whom the reader has already met.

"Make a light litter of small boughs, and throw your coats over it. The lady must be carried."

The order was instantly obeyed, and a few green boughs ingeniously braided together, were covered with the upper garments of the men, after which, her late companion lifted her still half unconscious form upon it, and thus she was conveyed still deeper into the forest's depth, as gently as though she slept upon her bed.

The party had not proceeded more than a quarter of a mile, followed by their well trained horses, before they came out upon the open circle or clearing, before described in these pages, and upon which opened on the east side the mouth of the Banditti's Cave!

Into this the party gently filed, under the direction of their leader, and the lady was safely deposited within with as much quiet unconcern and want of curiosity on the part of the men as though it were all an every day occurrence with them. But a keen observer would have noticed that they constantly watched their leader's eye.

True authority effects its will without either bustle or confusion. It is not your ranting, profane commander who is quickest obeyed, but it is rather he, who, feeling he requires no foreign aid of effect to enforce his orders, issues them almost in a whisper, or may be by a look. It was thus with him who directed and controlled the party we have referred to; his slightest sign was noted and its import at once understood; his every movement had an air of authority about it, and doubtless his right to the respect that he thus elicited, had been sustained by more than one fearful example.

It seemed perhaps a little singular to see those fierce and daring spirits thus held in check and directed by the silent arm of discipline; in physical power not one of them but was far more than a match for their leader, but they had early become aware of the immense importance in a promiscuous company like theirs of sustaining the authority, and respecting it, too, of one directing mind. Habit and daily custom had caused this conviction to grow into a law, until he who had been thus entrusted with their entire obedience had shown himself mentally their masters, as well as sustaining that position by appointment and long service.

The leader looked about him thoughtfully for a moment, as if to take in the position of affairs, and inspect the condition of the cave. Then turning again to his companion, he said:

"Carli."

"Yes, captain."

"Is everything in the usual condition at the cave?" asked the leader.

"Yes, captain."

"And our prisoner?"

"Which, captain?"

"Which?"

"The gentleman, or the lady, captain?"

"The lady, Carli, is no prisoner."

"The other is as quiet as you could possibly wish, captain. He's a jewel of a prisoner, who loves a good story, and who makes no attempt to escape after promising not to do so."

"You have trusted him abroad, then, Carli, have you?"

"Only under our own eyes, captain."

"Is he inquisitive?"

"No, captain."

"And has caused no trouble, then?"

"None, save that he will sometimes beat father Blemen at chess."

The leader smiled and turned away, entering another division of the cave, where he might doff the assumed character that he bore.

The stratagem had succeeded, and the lady Gustine was a prisoner.

CHAPTER XVI.

KARL BLASIUS, THE ROBBER.

'Tis of a lady in her earliest youth,
The very last of that illustrious race. ROGERS.

WHEN the lady Gustine fully recovered her consciousness, she found herself in an apartment lighted only by the flame of a single hanging lamp, and from the appearance of the place she knew that she must be in the subdivision of a cave, for the walls and roof about her were of solid stone, and there was no visible opening or outlet, while a half undefined dampness seemed to fill the air and to rest on the cold stones that surrounded her on all sides. A slight cough that escaped her, reverberated with hollow echoes through her cell, with such grum and solemn tones as almost to startle her.

She had been sleeping, doubtless, for a considerable period of time, for she felt much refreshed in body, at the same time realizing a faintness and hunger that convinced her she must have been long without refreshments.—She saw that she had been upon the couch of soft skins, where she had slept with all her clothes about her, and with no change, save that they had been loosened, to admit of a free circulation. On rising she found a small table close by her side, upon which were placed some fruit and wine, and some more substantial food; of the latter she partook with avidity, of the former, sparingly, and making a hasty toilet, she sought for the door of this singular apartment; but although she examined every part of the room with the utmost care and patience, she could in no way discover the door, and, indeed, to her eyes, the place seemed to be a hollow, scooped out from the very interior of the massive rock, without the means of either ingress or egress.

A nervous and superstitious feeling crept over her as she seemed to realize these facts, and she shuddered at her lone condition. She remembered the wild stories that had been told her in childhood about fair young ladies being stolen away by some evil spirits and so enchanted as either to sleep for many years in punishment for some sin, or to be incarcerated until some good fairy should discover and release her. It seemed to her but a few hours comparatively since she was safe in her father's hall; but yet it might be a hundred years; and thus her fancy ran wild with her imagination, into most fantastic improbabilities.

She could not recall the fact as to how she came there, though she remembered well all things up to the period when she was so exercised with fatigue and fear in the forest. She could recall even those last moments of consciousness when her sight began to fail her, and she half slid, half fell from her horse; but after that moment all was a blank.

The lady Gustine was not long left in doubt, however, for a snap, as of a secret spring, greeted her ears, and a piece of the rock in one side of the cave flew open as if by magic, and in the next moment she found herself once more with her companion of the previous day. They gazed at each other for some minutes in silence, the lady like one who had been sadly, deeply wronged, her companion with an expression combining love, sarcasm and triumph, if such qualities could all be delineated upon the human face at the same moment; a flood of strange and contending feelings seemed coursing through his brain, while his soul appeared to be too full for utterance.

His dress had also undergone a marked change since she had seen him last, and altogether, with the surroundings and associations of the place, he now seemed to her like another being. His plain, rich suit, of English style and cut, had given place to velvet small clothes and brogans, and silk hose, while a close setting scarlet jacket, trimmed with silver lace, covered the upper portion of his person. A velvet cap, ornamented with a single flowing feather of snowy whiteness, completed his costume. The handle of a long dirk knife curiously wrought and inlaid, might be seen discovering itself from the folds of his doublet, and a pair of pistols were worn openly in a sword belt. Though the chains for its support being at his side, the latter weapon was not in its place.

"Am I a prisoner here, sir?" asked the lady Gustine, at length, finding that her singular companion remained silent, and seemingly lost in meditation.

He started at her words as though he had been in a dream, and then said:

"A prisoner? In part, lady, yes, and in part, no, for though you are ostensibly confined within this cave, still you are none the less mistress of it and its master!"

"The mistress?"

"Ay, lady."

"You speak in riddles, sir; I do not understand you," said the lady.

"You will find it an easy riddle to solve, lady," replied the robber.

"I understand you not," she reiterated with much earnestness.

"Then 'tis fitting time that you should do so," he replied. "Know, lady, if you do not already realize the fact, that I am no Englishman, nor is my name Robert Stanley. On the contrary, I am the master of this cave, the leader of this band of free men, and bear a name that has often caused a shudder in that fair bosom."

"Who are you?" exclaimed lady Gustine, half suspecting the truth.

"I am Karl Blasius!" said the robber, bending his keen eye upon her.

"Gracious heaven protect me," exclaimed the lady Gustine, as she shrank still farther from the strange being before her, and trembling at the disclosure just made her.

"Nay, lady Gustine, you need not fear me," he said, sadly. "Listen to my story, and then I think you will not shudder so at the sight of me."

"Go on, sir," said the lady Gustine, appearing to recover her self-possession suddenly, while a proud and dignified air diffused itself quickly over her expression and bearing.

"Lady, I once told you the story of my parentage, though you then little thought that Karl Blasius spoke to you; I told you then of the influences that had formed the character of the robber's boy. On the laws that had first driven my father from their protection and then punished him so severely, I was daily revenged, and the purses of the proud nobles suffered in their substance at my pleasure.—But upon their pride, their honor, their most sacred treasures, I had not revenged myself, and though I had sworn before heaven, one day, to do so, yet the opportunity had never yet occurred for my purpose.

"A little more than a month since, however, fortune seemed to favor my purpose, and I at once embarked in its accomplishment. At the little inn of Mornentz, not many weeks since, I chanced to meet with an Englishman; our road over the mountain lay through the same path; I led him hither. He had letters of introduction and credit to many people in Bronts, among the rest to your father. I was no stranger to your family, nor to the reported beauty of the lady Gustine; I saw a plan at once in these letters, a plan ready formed to my hands; I assumed the name of Stanley, and appeared among you."

"Horrible!"

"What is so horrible, lady?"

"That you should have committed murder

to possess yourself of the letters wherewith you deceived my father and myself," said the lady Gustine, with a shudder at the thought.

"Nay, it is not so bad as you suppose, lady," said the robber; "we never commit murder, save in self-defence, and then but rarely. But hear my story, for I shall speak most honestly and truly to you, the only being of thy class or sex who has ever interested or tamed me. Will it please you, lady, to sit down?"

The robber saw that the lady was weak from late excitement and nervousness, and she gladly seated herself upon a rough stool, over which her companion threw a wolf skin, as he continued:

"I came to your father's halls, resolved by untiring assiduity to win your confidence at least, if not your love, and then to steal you away from your home, and, like a gaudy jewel to wear you—"

The lady Gustine seemed exercised by mingled fear and indignation.

"But alas! lady," continued the robber, "the chase I ran was my own undoing; while I wooed thee in jest, as I supposed, my heart was in earnest, and I discovered at last that I loved you only too sincerely. Nay, sneer not at me, lady, I am but telling thee the truth —I am not suing in this place—here, I alone command, I am not trying to persuade or influence the lady Gustine now—it is not my object. Well, you received me kindly, most kindly, you even listened to my words with more than ordinary interest, and I felt that although you might not love, yet you were much interested in a disguised bandit. At length I invented the story of the ruined tower, and told it to thee to excite thy curiosity. We rode out together and alone, such a chance might never again occur; you know the rest, lady, you were brought, insensible through fatigue and fear, to this cave."

"A brave business, truly, to ruin and deceive a defenceless female," said the lady, struggling to keep down her woman-spirit that promised every moment to burst forth in sobs.

"Your sarcasm is just," said the robber, with conscious guilt.

"It was base, base beyond precedent," continued the lady, bitterly.

"I acknowledge all," said the robber, "but I could tell thee, lady, of far more bitter grievances by thy class of society, daily and hourly perpetrated upon the humble peasantry of the valley, grievances to which thine would not bear a feather's weight in comparison.—What does your noble think of deceiving and betraying the honor of a poor peasant girl? Nothing, she is humble in the sight of the world, a mere tool, a plaything for the proud and rich: she has no redress, but thus broken-hearted and ruined, goes down to the grave, which not even a rude stone will mark out in commemoration."

"What care your castle-encircled noblemen for the starving hamlets within sight of their turret windows? Nothing, they laugh and jest as heartily as though there were no such thing as hunger about them, washing down their rich food by draughts of wine that would feed and clothe a province. Lady, belong to that humble class, though your father's cousin, and for years have I robbed the rich to feed the poor, and have humbled the purse-proud to exalt the lowly."

"Your father was absent yesterday, lady Gustine, to the northern valley, for the purpose of ejecting a poor tenant from his lease, and drive him from his humble shelter, wife, children and all, because forsooth, his crops had failed him, and he had not the means to pay the stipend demanded. The poor man met him though, with a purse that settled all," said the robber, with a glow of satisfaction upon his cheek; "for I knew your father's business, and defeated his object, and last night that poor man's prayer was breathed for Karl Blasius, the robber! while thy father, lady, returned to his princely halls to find his daughter stolen away, without the least trace of her, or suspicion whence she had gone."

Lady Gustine covered her face with her hands, and sobbed aloud.

"I see you are heeding me closely, lady," said the robber, marking her exhibition of feeling; "but this is only one instance. I could name you a hundred within an hour. Do you wonder now why the rich are so hated by the poor—do you not see how high are the barriers that exist between the humble and the proud?"

"And what does all this portend to me?" at length asked the lady Gustine. "Why do you relate these things to me at this time?

How do they affect me, or the injury you have done me?"

"These matters I have recited, lady, to show you the influences that have so tempted me, and spurred me on to seek the revenge that I have already named; but when I look upon thee, as now, I realize how feeble is the will, how subtle the reason within us. I remember no longer my vows and my long cherished animosity; they vanish like a dream, and I can only realize how much, how truly I love."

"Dost remember the story I told thee once at thy father's castle of the fair and beautiful Julia Blasius?"

"I remember."

"Dost realize that I am that child which she bore in her arms when she was spurned from her father's gates?"

"Yes," said the lady, thoughtfully.

"Then, lady, can you wonder that I was incited to such revenge as that of humbling one of thy proud estate?"

The lady was silent.

"And yet," continued the robber, "so dearly have I learned to love thee, that all the revenge that prompted me is gone. I am no longer bound by its power, but am enchained by quite as binding a force, the silken ties of the heart. My whole purpose of life seems changed. I see the things that surround me with different eyes; the light that guides me takes the hue of thy divinity; the wood, the glen, even these rude and boisterous spirits that own my authority, all seem changed to me. All my thoughts are of love."

"Love!" uttered the lady, with deep scorn upon her lip.

"Ay, lady, love, deep, passionate, absorbing love. My revenge is gone, my anger is no more. I look and I love, and only turn away to dream and think of love."

"I scorn both you and the passion you so unblushingly avow."

"It is not to be wondered at that you should do so at first," he replied.

"At first!"

"Ay, until you shall have become familiar with the change that has come over your fortune."

And will you really detain me here as a prisoner against my will?" she asked, trembling once more with fear, and losing all the pride that had so lately actuated her.

"Lady, I have ventured too much in my effort to gain possession of the coveted prize, for us to part now," said the robber, with emphasis.

"Will heaven desert me in this fearful place?" sobbed the lady Gustine. "Alas, alas, I am lost forever."

"Nay, Gustine, be calm," said the robber, soothingly, "you need fear no harm here nor enforcement stronger than gentle words; if these shall fail me to win thy willing hand, then time must change thy purpose, and finally I think thou wilt go cheerfully with me before the priest—ay, in spite of that scornful curl of thy beautiful lip, still I shall succeed. I shall see that you are well attended, and want for no comfort that my poor means can command. By touching that silver gong that hangs yonder from the walls, you can at all times summon one of your own sex, whose constant duty it will be to attend your pleasure. And now for the present, lady Gustine, farewell."

"Stay."

"Well, lady."

"Will you not free me, and send me back to my father, that I may bless you?" sobbed the lady Gustine.

"Lady, I cannot."

"Be generous; O, set me free again," she exclaimed, in agony of feeling.

The robber had spoken truly; he did love the lady, and as she addressed him thus he seemed to waver in his purpose, her tears seemed to move him greatly, and he looked upon her with real anguish depicted in his face. Gustine saw the transient advantage she had gained, and said, approaching, and even kneeling at his feet:

"O, take a noble revenge, I pray you, and send me home again."

"Lady, rise," said the robber, "implore me not thus. I would go through any danger to serve thee, but to part with thee now would be impossible; I could not bring my mind to that. Still, fear not for thyself, love shall respect and protect thee."

As he said this, the robber hastily withdrew from the apartment, as though he feared for his resolution if he stayed longer.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE TAMBOURINE GIRL.

"A dancing shape an image gay—
To haunt, to startle, to waylay."

The lady Gustine remained as the robber had left her, for a long period, musing upon her situation. She reflected upon what he had said, and by weighing each word, endeavored to judge of his plan and purpose towards herself. She depicted in fearful and vivid colors her forlorn condition, and she wept bitterly as she thought how terrible would be her father's anguish when he found her gone. She knew that no clue could be had as to what had become of her, for she had mentioned her destination to no one when she left the castle, and she fully realized that there would be no indicating or guiding circumstances which might lead to her discovery. At one moment she remembered that many must have seen and recognized her as she rode out of the town beside him who had been known as Robert Stanley, but this would form no chain of guidance, for he who represented the English stranger, was unsuspected of any connection with the robbers, and his disappearance would be looked upon probably as quite as singular as her own, by those who had known him of late.

In this mood, despair seemed to envelope the very soul of the fair prisoner.

At last her eyes accidentally settled upon the gong to which the robber had referred, and hoping in some way to learn more of her true situation, she touched it lightly, when a young girl of some fifteen summers entered the apartment by the means already described, and asked her pleasure. The lady gazed at her for a moment as if trying to recall her features, for she was sure she had seen them before, and in spite of the anxiety of mind that she experienced, she could not but admire the rude, peculiar beauty of the girl's face and form.

"Come hither, my good girl, who are you?" asked she.

"My name is Alanda," said the young girl, curtseying modestly.

"I have seen you somewhere before, and yet I cannot tell where it was."

"I remember," she answered, looking archly at the lady Gustine.

"And where was it, pray?"

"In the market place of Bronts, where you gave me a golden eighth."

"O, I remember; you are the dancing girl," said the lady, recalling the scene before referred to."

"You then were not stolen away from your home, but perhaps were born here."

"Stolen? O, no, lady, this is my home.—My father is lieutenant to the brave Karl Blasius."

"And are you happy and contented to live among robbers, my good girl?"

"Among robbers, lady? Our people only rob the rich, and surely that's no harm."

"Alas! for the teaching that has fitted thee for such belief," said the lady half to herself.

"Are you the lady they say our captain loves so much?" asked the girl, innocently.

"I do not know," replied the lady Gustine, with a shudder.

"Why, the men say that his very nature has changed since he knew you, and that he is moody and thoughtful all the time now-a-days; he must love you very dearly I should think, to make him alter so much," said the girl innocently, as she looked with admiration upon the lady's beauty.

"Who lives in this cave?" asked the lady Gustine, after a few moments' pause.

"We all live here—the single men away back in the rock, and the front part is divided off for the officers and their families. This is the best division, and the folks say it is a great curiosity, and that is the only entrance," said the girl, pointing to the little opening where she had come in.

"Is there no one else confined here besides myself?" asked the lady.

"No."

"What became of an Englishman named Stanley, who came here some time since?'

"O, I forgot him; he's here still," replied the girl, correcting herself.

"Indeed?"

"Yes; do you know Mr. Stanley?" asked Alanda, with animation.

"No."

"How did you know he was here then?" asked the child, innocently enough.

"heard so."

"O, he's a fine gentleman," continued the girl, "everybody likes him, and they say that the captain is going to let him go again, as he has done with some letters he had of his, and will not now fear to have him at liberty once more."

"When will Mr. Stanley go, my good girl?" asked the lady, eagerly.

"I don't know when; but it will be in a few days I think."

Gustine reflected shrewdly for some moments upon the information she had thus chanced to gain, and resolved to profit by it. First she wished to obtain the confidence and friendship of the girl, and then she hoped to be able to communicate in some way with Mr. Stanley before his departure, so as to let her friends know where she was, if not to attempt to make her escape by his assistance. Though burning with impatience at the plan she had just conceived, yet the lady Gustine was sufficiently shrewd not to betray herself even to the young girl who stood before her, but proceeded with caution.

"Alanda, come hither to the light. Do you think this is a pretty ring?" asked she, showing a chaste pearl, set about with a double circle of tiny diamonds.

"O, beautiful, very beautiful," said the girl, in delight, at the ornament.

"Well, take it and wear it for my sake.—I know that you will be kind to me."

"O, it is too pretty for me," said the girl, hesitating. "I shouldn't dare to take it; it must be very valuable too, for these are all diamonds," she continued, as she counted the little brilliants.

"You will wear it for my sake, I know, wont you now, Alanda?"

"If you really wish me to, I will," said the young girl, delighted.

"I do—there wear it, it fits very well," she continued, putting it upon her finger.

"O, *how* pretty."

"Can you read, Alanda?" asked the lady Gustine, carelessly.

"No, lady."

"That's a pity, and if I stay here long I must try to teach you."

As the lady spoke, she took a small ivory tablet from her pocket, and wrote something hurriedly upon its leaves, while Alanda was busy examining the beauty of her new present, and folding them once more together and securing them by the spring attached, she toyed with the tablet covers, so small and finely wrought, for some time, as though she were really amused with the examination, and then carelessly turning to the girl, she said:

"Where is the Englishman confined, Alanda, do you know, my good girl?"

"O, yes, just on the opposite side to this. It's only a few steps."

"Do you ever go into his apartment?"

"O, yes, very often, I always carry him in his dinner," she replied.

"Have you carried in his dinner to-day?" asked the lady, with assumed indifference.

"Not yet."

"When you go in, will you hand him this from me, without letting any one see it, Alanda?"

"What for, my lady?"

"O, merely to please me; but if you should let any one know know it I should be offended."

The girl paused for a moment in thought, evidently considering whether there could be any harm in doing so trifling an errand, and influenced doubtless not a little by her present, she replied:

"Yes, I will give it to him, if it will please you for me to do so."

"It will very much."

"Then I will do it."

"That's a good girl; now you may go; put it in your bosom, and be sure that no one sees it at all, save him."

"She said that she could not read, so unless some one else gets the tablets, there will be no danger of discovery," mused lady Gustine to herself. "It cannot be that the girl appeared thus indifferent that she might deceive me, she was too innocent for that. Mr. Stanley must be a gentleman, and thus appealed to, I know he will exert himself to relieve me, or else to inform my father of my unhappy situation. Hope already beams in upon my despairing heart. All is not blank and dark."

Thus saying, she seemed to find fresh life and spirits, and her fair face no longer appeared the picture of despair that it had so lately presented; it almost looked cheerful and contented now. And then she fell to considering what sort of a person the real Mr. Stanley was, whom she had just addressed, whether he was handsome and accomplished; so active is the mind, under all circumstances. Then she would content herself with the idea that he must be a gentleman, else he would never have been the rightful possessor of those letters that the robber had presented to her father.

Thus reasoning with herself, she approached the spot at which the door opened in the wall, but so nice was the workmanship, that it was with no little difficulty that she was enabled at last to discover it, and found as she had already presumed, that it opened only from the outer side, where the spring must be inlaid: as it was evidently so constructed as to lock itself on being closed. With nothing now to occupy her mind, except indeed, the gloomy thoughts that such a place might be supposed most readily to give rise to, she wandered hither and thither, examining the cave and its furniture with the most minute exactness.

There was a table on one side of the apartment, upon which was a book written in the Latin language, and before it a rude crucifix, as though some monk or devout person had occupied the cell, and close beside the table there hung upon the wall a representation, finely painted, of the crucifixion of our Saviour, with some lines written beneath in Hebrew. Still further on there lay upon a rude couch made from hewn timber, the hood and cowl of a friar, with his staff, gown and sandals. This must be the room recently occupied by some monk, she thought, and as she walked on, looking here and there, she came upon the dress of a Jew! A strange train of thought came over her at once; she remembered the person she had met on the highway when riding with her father, and all was now explained. It was no longer a mystery why the eyes of the supposed Jew had raised such a train of thoughts in her memory, now that she knew who he was!

In a little niche of the stone wall was an ivory image of the virgin, and beside it lay the buckle and belt of some person, and a small dagger within its scabbard, which Gustine seized, and thrust into her bosom with exultation. It would be in vain to attempt a description of the thoughts that actuated her brain as she seized that tiny, but fatal instrument; a whole tragedy passed across her mind in one instant of time, as she hailed her new though silent friend with a fearful smile of gratification. If all else fails me, she thought, this shall be my last resort.

Still persevering in her search, the lady found in a dark recess, some Latin and German books, but mostly in manuscript, with a highly illuminated edition of the Bible; all these tokens went to convince her that the apartment had been the resort of some monk, either formerly or perhaps at the present time.

Near the entrance of the cell, as she looked on with curious eye, she saw upon the floor marks of blood! Perhaps the vital tide of some poor wretch confined here like herself,

and who in a struggle for liberty was doubtless slain there at the entrance of the cave. It was in dry clots, and in one spot it was slippery, and Gustine knew that it must therefore be *fresh!* She shuddered and turned pale at the thought, and wandered towards the table upon which were the cross and emblem, and prostrating herself before it, she prayed long and fervently, for strength and guidance in her unhappy situation, and more than all, she prayed for comfort and consolation to her father, who even then was doubtless weeping for her loss. Whatever might be the faults of the lord of Ghertstein—engendered more by his position, doubtless, than from any real hardness of heart—his child loved him well and truly; he had ever been a kind and dear parent to her, and she cherished and revered him. Her prayer for him at this trying time was therefore unselfish and devout.

She rose from her devotion, calmer and more self-possessed, and again traversed the cave, examining its peculiar ornaments and furniture. She tried to read the illumed pages of the Bible that she found lying among the books, but its letters were more like hieroglyphics to her eyes than like any alphabetical characters that she had ever been taught. It was one of those evidences of patience and perseverance emanating from the early priests who thus consumed "midnight oil" in making copies of the holy book which their religion taught them should be read only by themselves, and not trusted to the indiscriminate masses. The lady gazed upon the fine artistic piece of copying, and interested herself for some time with its pages.

Then again in her nervous agitation, she reviewed her present situation, recalled the past few weeks of her life from the period when she had first made the acquaintance of him who had so cruelly betrayed her confidence, and now held her a prisoner. All this was a vivid picture, but when she attempted to fathom the *future*, then she trembled indeed. Of course she knew the robber's purpose; he had already avowed it to her—that she should become his bride!

"The wife of Karl Blasius, the robber!"

As the lady Gustine repeated these words, they seemed to excite her to such a degree that it brought over her appearance a seeming calmness, and could the robber have seen the expression of her face as she quietly drew the dagger she had found in the cave, from her bosom and examine its point, he would have been satisfied that he could never press that form to his heart without seeing it in the next instant a corpse!

At last in her impatience she once more touched the gong and summoned Alanda.

"Did you give the tablets to Mr. Stanley, my good girl?" she asked of her.

"No, my lady," she replied, "I have not yet been into his apartment."

"Will you not go in there soon?" asked she, with impatience.

"As you sounded the gong, I was just going there," said Alanda.

"Go there, go, quick as thou wilt, I do not want thee any longer," said the lady Gustine, nervously.

"Yes, lady, you can ring again, if you want me," replied the girl, pleasantly.

How impatiently did the lady Gustine await the lapse of sufficient time for her once more to summon the girl. She could scarcely endure the suspense that she so keenly experienced, but walked her narrow cell with a hurried and irregular step, ever and anon pausing before the entrance, to listen for some sounds without, that might indicate to her the movements there; and thus she continued to do for some thirty minutes, when becoming nervous beyond longer endurance, and most anxious to know the result of her message by Alanda, she once more sounded the silver gong.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE TWO PRISONERS.

Morn once again! Morn in the lone dim cell,
The cavern of the prisoner's fever dream,
And morn on all the green, rejoicing hills. HEMANS.

THE reader must now go back with us to the night when the two travellers made their way through the depths of the forest, amid those strange and mysterious noises, until they finally arrived where we left them at the bandit's cave. Ere this it has doubtless been understood that the Englishman whom we met at the little inn of Mornentz, and whom the robber chief had cunningly led to his cave, was Robert Stanley, whose letters Karl Blasius had boldly improved, in order to enable him to carry out his designs upon the noble and unsuspecting family of Ghertstein, and during which time, of course, the Englishman had been closely confined at the cave, in order to prevent the discovery of the trick the robber was playing. The reader has already noticed how the prisoner passed his time in listening to the wild stories of the robber band.

Karl Blasius had now fully succeeded in his evil design upon the gentle lady Gustine, or at least as far as he could do by means of the disguise he had so cunningly assumed, and so well personated, and it now only remained for him to release his unjustly-retained prisoner; and yet the execution of this design was not unattended with most serious objections to his mind, and he weighed the matter well before he made up his mind to the object. Of course, he knew very well that no power upon earth could prevent her father from attacking his stronghold, if he could but discover the right road to it, and believed his child to be there; therefore, though he could easily conduct the Englishman out of the forest by a route so complicated and obscure as utterly to confound all his ideas of locality, yet the fact of his afterwards appearing with his story at Bronts, would betray all.

In this dilemma, the robber seemed to be puzzled as to what he should do. He could not make up his mind to take the Englishman's life, as he had in no wise offended, but on the contrary had ever made himself most agreeable, companionable and contented, during the period that he was informed at the outset he must remain at the forest cave.—Various schemes suggested themselves to the robber's mind, but none appeared to satisfy him. He knew that any promise elicited, would not be considered binding, when the prisoner was once free from the force that had exacted it, and most certainly he could get no voluntary one from the Englishman. Even the sanctity of an oath was annulled, when it was given under forcible eliciting.

As to the members of the band, they had generally become much attached to the prisoner. The fact was, he was a bit of a philosopher, travelling for his pleasure, and he was

not one to let any mawkish sense of delicacy prevent him from making himself comfortable. He was a student, too, of human nature, and did not regret this opportunity of undestanding the phases of life he met with among these desperate men, provided he could do so without material injury to himself or others.—Upon voluntarily giving his word as a gentleman that he would not attempt an escape, or to leave the cave until he was permitted to do so freely, he was allowed to go abroad in its immediate vicinity to seek that exercise that he found he so much needed. On such occasions, he not unfrequently joined in the sports of the band, and created no little envy among them by his feats of strength and remarkable agility in manly exercise.

This was the state of affairs at the cave, at the period when we would again introduce the reader there, and when the lady Gustine despatched the tablets secretly by the dancing girl, Alanda, to the Englishman. As the young girl entered the apartment of the latter at the usual meal hour to serve it, as was her custom, she placed the food before him, and after a few moments' pause, she handed the tablets as she had been requested by the lady. Not a little surprised, the Englishman opened the tiny leaves, and with much curiosity read the following lines, traced in a hasty hand:

"SIR:

"I am, like yourself, a prisoner here. I learn that your name is Stanley, doubtless the gentleman whose letters of introduction to my father's house, and that of many others of Bronts, have been feloniously purloined, and used by another, who has thus been enabled to impose upon us all, and had so far gained my confidence as to be enabled to ensnare me hither and imprison me. The object of this hasty scroll, is to beg that you will, if possible, communicate with me. If this may not be, as I learn that you are soon to leave here, I pray that you will inform my father where I am. He is the lord of Ghertstein, and will bless you for the service. The bearer of this tells me that she cannot read, and therefore she will not understand this. I have told her to give you this as a present from me. think she may be trusted to return it. Write whatever you think best, and send it back, saying to her that it is of no use to you, and that I had better keep it. Let my situation be my apology for this.

"GUSTINE DE B."

Robert Stanley suppressed the wonder that for a moment possessed him, and whistling a light air, afterwards partook of some of the food that had been prepared for him, engaging Alanda in a lively and humorous vein of conversation, and while he did so, stealing an opportunity hastily to write some lines upon the tablets and close them up again.—Before the girl left him, he said:

"Alanda, you may take this back again to the lady, and tell her it is of no use to me; she had better keep it herself. Wont you, my good girl? And you needn't let any one know about it, Alanda."

"O, yes. I'll do anything for you, Mr. Stanley, and just as you say."

"That's a good girl, and when I get to the next town, I must send you a present."

"Did you ever see this lady?" asked Alanda, placing the tablets in her bosom.

"No—why?"

"You never saw her?"

"No."

"She's very beautiful."

"Do you think so?" said the Englishman.

"I do indeed; such hair and eyes, and such a sweet little mouth, I never saw before. She gave me this ring when I was in there—see how bright it is—is it not beautiful, Mr. Stanley?"

"Very, very pretty, Alanda, but don't forget to return her those tablets."

"O, I'll remember that," replied the girl, still admiring the ring as she went, and evidently too much taken up with her present to consider the errand that she so thoughtlessly undertook.

At this moment, just as she left the Englishman, she heard the gong that lady Gustine in her impatience had once more rung, and without further delay, she hastened to answer the summons. Perhaps it was fortunate that the lady Gustine happened to sound the gong at this moment, as it prevented Alanda from losing time to go in any other direction with the tablets, which once seen, even by accident, would have exposed her to a more rigorous and close confinement.

THE MISTAKE OF A LIFE-TIME.

CHAPTER XVIII.—[CONTINUED.]

"Well, did you deliver the tablets, Alanda, as I requested you?" asked the lady, impatiently, though she strove to suppress her feelings, and awaited until the girl had closed the entrance once more behind her.

"Yes, lady," she replied, taking the article referred to from her bosom.

"What did he say, Alanda?"

"He said it was of no use to him, and that you had better keep it yourself."

"O, he did," said lady Gustine, taking the tablets, and eagerly reading as follows:

"LADY:

"Your singular position is known to me; at this moment I cannot advise you of what means it will be best to adopt for your release, but I will find means to do so ere long. Like yourself, I am still a prisoner, though they have informed me that my release will soon be granted. Be assured, lady, that I will never desert you here, now that I am aware of your situation, but will discover some means for your escape before I leave the cave myself. You seem to understand that I was captured and my letters of introduction to your father and others, were used by the robber, for his own purposes.

"Be content, lady; let no fear or forebodings depress you, and trust in me.

"ROBERT STANLEY."

"You may go, Alanda, I shall not want anything at present," said lady Gustine, looking up from the tablets.

"I thought you just sounded the gong for me, lady," she answered, a little surprised.

"Did I? O, yes, so I did, but it is no matter now—I have changed my mind," she replied, gently signifying to the girl that she might go, but in vain attempting to conceal the satisfaction that the message from Mr. Stanley gave her.

As soon as the entrance was closed, the lady again referred to the message, and read it with the utmost interest; every word was carefully weighed and considered.

"How generously he writes," she said to herself, thoughtfully; "I know he must be a noble and brave man, or he would not write thus. He has never seen me, and yet he pledges himself at once to release me."

"Be content, lady; let no fear or forebodings depress you, and trust in me," she read half aloud, once more.

"I will trust in thee, generous man, let what will come of it. There is something in these few lines that gives me fresh hope, fresh confidence, that I shall soon be restored again to my father and my home."

A new spirit came over the fair lady Gustine. She was no longer sad and depressed, but notwithstanding her singular position, she seemed to be comparatively cheerful and con-

tented. This Karl Blasius marked well, and gave it such an interpretation as was best suited to his own wishes, for he did not for a moment suspect that there had been any communication between his two prisoners. Though the lady met him in his daily visits to her cell with cool and undisguised displeasure, yet he appeared to feel satisfied to think that she had learned to suppress her grief and tearful pleading to be sent back to her father. The robber was little used to judging of the human heart, as evinced in a woman's breast; he understood human nature as it worked in the bosom of the sterner sex, and could read the character of his men like the open leaves of a book; but he did not understand the lady Gustine, when in his blind hope, he thought that she was gradually becoming contented and reconciled to fill the place that he destined her for—his wife. He thought that matters had now assumed such a shape, that he might venture to release the Englishman, with some ordinary precaution as to putting his power of again finding the cave at fault, by having him conducted from the forest by a path that should leave him in the river country, far below Bronts.

It was on one calm afternoon, some two weeks subsequent to the date of the lady Gustine's arrival at the cave, that the robber chief entered the apartment occupied by Mr. Stanley, and by his manner at once showed that he had come on an unusual errand. He was greeted with the courtesy that the Englishman always extended to him when they met; not that he could regard the robber with any friendly feelings, but because policy dictated that it was the best course for him to pursue while in his power.

"Well, Mr. Stanley," said the robber, throwing himself carelessly into a vacant seat, "I have come, after acting a jailor to you for so long a time, to set you free at last, and to bid you go in peace from my cave."

"That's cheerful news," said the Englishman, "welcome news. When am I at liberty to go?"

"From this hour," replied Karl Blasius, "I claim no further control over your movements. The good friar Blemen will guide you to the nearest town, where you will be left in safety to pursue your own course."

As the robber spoke, he turned from the room for a single moment, but soon returned again, bringing the pack that belonged to his prisoner, and laying it down by his side, he said:

"I return you the contents of your pack, all save the letters. Having improved them for a purpose of my own, of course they are no longer in my possession. Perhaps it will be some satisfaction to you to know that it was they alone that led me to bring you here, and had you not mentioned that they were in your pack on the afternoon that we left the inn at Mornentz, we should have parted that night."

The Englishman examined the pack for a moment, and then remarked:

"There are still some articles missing, I believe, captain; rather important ones, too."

"What do you refer to?" asked the robber. "If my people have dared—"

"O, there is no cause for crimination," replied the Englishman, half smiling at the other's earnestness. "You see my pistols and dirk have been forgotten—they were in the pack when you took charge of it."

"True," said the robber, quickly, "here are my own, will you accept them?"

As he spoke, he drew from his belt a pair of superb pistols, inlaid with gold and silver, and also a broad Italian dagger, of most curious workmanship.

"Thank you," said the Englishman, examining them with evident interest. "It is some time since I have grasped the like; it gives me assurance of freedom! These are trusty weapons, captain."

"They are indeed," said the robber, significantly, "for I have tried them in more than one emergency."

"Are the pistols loaded with ball?" asked the Englishman.

"Yes, I loaded them myself," replied the robber, thrusting in the ramrod to show it.

"Good," said the Englishman, putting the weapons into his bosom.

After packing his few articles of necessity within his wallet, Robert Stanley went out at the mouth of the cave with a sense of freedom that thrilled through every vein, after the long confinement that he had experienced.—It was in the after part of the day, and though, as we have already said, he had been permitted before this to move about at certain times

for exercise without the cave, yet on seeing the open plat at this moment, with a sense of freedom exhilarating him, he wondered that he had not before marked the wild and sylvan beauty of the spot more minutely; and even the notes of the birds seemed to impart additional melody. As he passed along on his way from his own apartment to the mouth of the cave, he marked well the secret door, which he learned from Alanda led to the cell occupied by the lady Gustine. He told the robber chief that if he were to start at that time, it would bring him to the town at a late and inconvenient hour in the evening, and that, with his permission, he would defer his departure until the following morning. This being agreed upon, it was understood generally among the band that the Englishman had already been liberated, and that on the following morning he was to leave the cave with the priest, who was to act as his guide, to the nearest market town to the south.

As night approached, Robert Stanley walked in and out of the cave unchallenged by the sentry on duty at its entrance, for orders had been given by the captain to permit him to pass at will. Engaging the attention of Alanda, while thus strolling about, he improved a moment when they were unobserved, to inquire of the girl, though with feigned indifference, the manner in which to open the secret door that led to the lady Gustine's cell. This the thoughtless girl told him at once, for if she had any scruples as to doing it, she reasoned that he was going to leave them now, and it would do no harm; besides which she had not forgotten the promise which Mr. Stanley had already renewed to her, of sending her a present from the next town when he should get there.

Having gained the information that he desired, the Englishman adroitly changed the conversation, and soon after, leaving Alanda, retired as he told her, to his bed for the night, though in reality to meditate upon the subject of releasing the fair prisoner, now that he had better surveyed the ground, and understood by what means he might gain admittance to her presence.

Since the night that the lady Gustine had been brought to the robber's cave, the priest had been quartered in the apartment occupied by the Englishman, and on this account Robert Stanley realized no little fear lest he should be unable to operate so successfully as he might otherwise have done, in behalf of the lady Gustine. However, as the night advanced, and it came at last to the usual hour for them to retire to sleep, the Englishman remembered a bottle of laudanum in his pack, with which he had supplied himself to still a raging tooth some weeks before, in a neighboring city, and quietly taking this from its place, he proposed to the priest, as this was to be his last night at the cave, that they should pledge each other in a cup of wine, probably the last that they might ever take together, and to which the companionable friar cheerfully assented.

He dropped a portion of the powerful narcotic into the priest's glass, and filled it with a sufficient quantity of wine to disguise any flavor of the drug that might impart itself to the liquor. Then filling another, they drank to each other's future health and happiness, after which the priest, feeling first the exhilarating effect of the wine warming his veins, as well as the first stimulating effect of the subtle poison he had drank, proposed to the Englishman to join him in a game of chess.—Robert Stanley hesitated at first, for this was the priest's favorite game, and whenever interested, he would be hours in playing a single one. But he dared not refuse, and so making a virtue of necessity, he sat down, fearing that he had given too small a dose to the priest to produce the narcotic effect he had hoped to see follow the drinking of the wine, by his companion.

But with his thoughts far away from the game, the Englishman moved first; the priest quickly followed him; move and move, again, the priest yawned, studied the board for a moment, yawned again, and moved on. But his companion now took more time, as if to study well the board before him, and at the same time cautiously stealing a glance at his partner, whom he discovered to be already nodding unconsciously. Suddenly he roused himself, rubbed his eyes, and applied himself for a moment to the game again; but as he extended his arm, half undecided as to a move, it dropped heavily upon the board, and at the same time his head sank gently upon his breast, he sighed once or twice, and was asleep.

How soundly he slept under the influence of the potent draught! Robert Stanley almost feared that he had given him too much, and that the dose might prove fatal, for he could not arouse him to consciousness, even sufficient to cause him to undress and retire. At last finding this to be the case, he took him in his arms and carried him to his bed, where he laid him in a comfortable position. He listened for a moment, with a nervous trepidation of feeling to the short, still breathing that the medicine induced, but in a few moments left the bed-side, and as it had now come to be a quiet hour, he resolved to attempt to make an entrance into the lady Gustine's apartment.

Looking at his watch, he found that it was already midnight, and, save the half suppressed song and jest of a party of the band in a distant part of the cave, and the occasional movement of the sentinel, who held the watch at the cavern's mouth, all was still and quiet. Casting aside his shoes, the Englishman stole out into the open division of the cave, and on his hands and knees crept in the deep shadow of an angle of the rocks as far as he could in the direction that he wished to pursue, then rising boldly, but silently, he quickly crossed the spot that came under the eye of the sentinel, when he looked inward upon the cave; chance favored him, he was unobserved, and sinking once more upon his hands and knees, he crept silently on to the spot where the door opened into the lady's prison. For a moment he paused to realize the awkwardness of his situation, in making his first visit at such an hour, but he knew very well that there was no time to be lost, and hesitating no longer, prepared to open the door and enter silently.

The secret entrance, so cut from within, but quite visible from without, was shaded in such a way that, being reached, he became partially screened from observation, and finding himself thus situated, he touched the spring, and the door gave way to his hand while he silently stepped within, taking care as he closed the door after him, to place his glove cautiously inside the spring, to prevent it from becoming quite fast, and thus enable him to open it without the key from within. The lady had started to her feet on the instant that he had opened the door, but as she saw him enter and take the precautions we have named as it regarded the secret spring, she seemed at once to know whom he must be, and his object in visiting her at such a singular hour and in this stealthy manner.

"Lady," he said, in a whisper, as soon as he could turn from the door, "this is no time for ceremony, and fortunately we already understand each other. Permit me to remove this lamp, so that its light will not strike through the crack that I have left open in the door; it might catch the sentinel's eye, or that of some person in the cave."

"O, sir, do you think there is any possibility of my escaping from this place?"

"If we are only discreet, I am sure it can be done, and that too almost at once."

"Heaven bless you for saying so," replied the lady Gustine, suppressing her tears.

"In the first place, then, I am to leave the cave early on the coming morning."

"So soon!"

"Yes; but you must leave also, lady, for I shall not go without you."

"How can this be done? I saw sentinels at the door of the cave when I looked out yesterday."

"It will be necessary, of course, lady Gustine, that you should be disguised. The priest who occupied this cell before you, was to be my guide from the woods, to-morrow; you must take his place, and personate his character. I will presently bring you sufficient of his garments to form a complete disguise for your person."

"The means to do that are here already," replied the lady, pointing to the garments which have been referred to. It is queer that only a few hours since I was looking at them with some such idea vaguely flitting through my brain."

"This is very good," said the Englishman, carefully examining the garments. "Fortune surely favors us; here is a cowl, body gown, sandals, staff, everything that is necessary for our purpose."

"But will not the priest himself appear, to confront and expose us?" asked the lady.

"I have taken good care to prevent that," replied the Englishman; "his wine to-night was heavily drugged with laudanum, and he will be sure to sleep until high noon to-morrow. A pistol fired by his very ear would not awake him."

"You have been very thoughtful."

"It rests with us to make our escape by the exercise of the utmost caution and self-possession."

"But do you know the path that leads out of the forest?" asked the lady Gustine.

"Not I, lady, and therein lies our safety in a great degree, as we must find a way of our own, in doing which, if your escape is discovered, and we are pursued, we shall be completely hidden from the band, whereas they might easily overtake and recapture us if we were to take the beaten route that leads to the highway; we must seem to take it though, but as soon as we are out of sight from the cave, we must dash boldly into the forest, thus leaving them at fault as to the spot where they may find us. The shady depths of the road are our only hope for safety."

"I see you are very provident and careful. O, I would suffer almost any hardship, if I thought it was only taking me from here and towards my home. I shall trust all to you, Mr. Stanley."

"I am glad you feel thus, for there will be much fatigue for you to endure, even under the most favorable circumstances, and I fear that gentle form of thine, lady, will be sadly wearied by fatigue."

"Nay, Mr. Stanley," continued the lady, cheerfully smiling upon him, "my spirits will sustain me against much hardship, you may rely; besides, I am used to much exercise."

"On horseback, lady, doubtless," said her companion, "but we must struggle on foot to-morrow. Take all the rest that you can to-night, so that you may be well refreshed in the morning, for with the earliest light I shall seek your door, when you may join me as the priest, and we will walk boldly out as though there were no secret or cause for fear of any kind."

"Good night, kind sir, I understand your plan fully," said the lady Gustine, offering her hand to him, which the Englishman pressed respectfully, and then bowing low, he withdrew as silently as he had come.

The Englishman easily reached his own apartment as he had come, unobserved, and once more approaching the bedside of the priest, he listened carefully to his breathing, almost shuddering as he did so, to witness the strong resemblance that there was presented in his present state, to death itself. The dose that Robert Stanley had administered in the wine was a potent one, perhaps fully as much as could have been given to a healthy person with safety. So completely was the priest under its influence now, that it had almost stilled the action of the lungs altogether, and the Englishman twice placed the flame of his lamp to the sleeper's very lips, in order to make sure that he breathed at all. Satisfied of this, and also feeling carefully of the priest's pulse, he prepared himself for a few moments' sleep.

But it was long before Robert Stanley could close his eyes in forgetfulness. The lady Gustine was constantly before him like a vision. He thought her extremely lovely, but that was not all. The romantic situation in which he found himself placed relating to her, was enough in itself to rouse a flood of interest in his breast, realizing as he did that she was solely dependent upon him for assistance in regaining her liberty. Musing upon these things in a half wakeful state he at last fell asleep, to dream them all over with increased vividness again and again until the morning.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE STRUGGLE IN THE FOREST.

Dead, for a ducat, dead! HAMLET.

WITH the first light of the morning the Englishman was stirring and arranging his dress for a long and tedious flight. He filled his canteen with wine from the bottle that had been broached on the previous evening, thrusting also the remnants of his last night's supper within his wallet, and carefully depositing his weapon in the most convenient manner about his person, he once more stole gently to the bedside of the sleeping friar. His breath was still short and faint, but the Englishman after feeling his pulse, was satisfied that his system would, ere the expiration of many hours, throw off the effects of the powerful drug. Confident of this, Robert Stanley left him with a light heart. Again exercising the utmost caution, he reached the cell in which the lady Gustine was confined, and found her, like himself, fully equipped and prepared to make a bold effort to regain her liberty.

"Are you quite ready, lady Gustine?" whispered the Englishman, as he entered.

"O, yes, this hour past; pray let us start at once; this suspense is too trying."

"The sooner the better for our purpose, lady," replied her companion.

"Stay," said the lady, "I had nearly forgotten one thing." As she spoke she returned to her couch of skins, and taking from thence the dagger that she had found in the cell, placed it beneath her inner girdle and said, "I am ready now."

"Come then, lady, and remember that you are Blemen, the priest, and be cautious."

They stepped out into the open cave together, the lady Gustine fully equipped as the priest, and the Englishman talking to her as such, while the two walked quietly past the drowsy sentinel. The guard had learned, in common with the rest of the band, that the friar and the Englishman were to leave in the morning together, and therefore he asked no question of them as they passed by, but sunk his head again upon his carbine, and dozed thoughtlessly on!

To Gustine, Mr. Stanley seemed to walk needlessly slow, as they moved across the open space or plat of ground, and turned their steps towards the main path to the high road. The time occupied by them in passing from the cave to the path where it turned through the wood, seemed to her to be an age, and in her impatience, she passed some steps in advance of her companion. But it was not long

before she realized the policy that dictated this, for as soon as a slight curve in the path shut them out of sight from the cave's mouth, the Englishman drew her arm nervously within his own, and after turning to one side, and gazing about him for a moment as if to fix the direction in his mind, he plunged at once into the depth of the forest, with a spirit and vigor that soon put his companion's impatience at rest, and satisfied her of his earnestness.—Lady Gustine showed far more physical strength than he had anticipated; indeed she had been brought up to much out-door exercise and her bodily strength was proportionably improved. On they pressed, Robert Stanley going before, and the lady following close upon his footsteps along the passage that he was oftentimes obliged to make by the exercise of main strength, to force open the thick and stout undergrowth that often beset the path.

They might have travelled thus for an hour or so most diligently, scarcely exchanging a word with each other, so earnest were they, when suddenly the Englishman stopped in a listening attitude for a moment, but seemingly convinced that his imagination had deceived him; he intimated as much to his companion, and was just preparing to move on again, when he paused a second time.

"Hark!" said he, with his hands to his ears so as to catch the sound from the light breeze, "that was a bugle note, and one to sound an alarm too! Lady, our escape is already discovered, but we have a fair start of them nevertheless, and need hardly fear being overtaken. There is the bugle note again; how clear and distinct it sounds, and how merrily it rings out upon this morning air!"

"Alas! they will be sure to overtake us—don't you think so, Mr. Stanley?"

"Not I, lady; it would puzzle a bloodhound to follow the track we have made through the woods."

"But these people know the woods well," replied the lady, anxiously.

"Its beaten paths, lady, doubtless they do; but we have left those far behind."

Their surmise was correct; the escape of the lady Gustine was indeed discovered, and gradually the sounds of pursuit drew nearer and nearer to them, until in a couple of hours the wood all about them resounded with the signals that Robert Stanley had learned partially to understand. He recognized those unearthly sounds and cries that had besieged his lone way on the night that the robber had led him through the forest to his cave. Now and then improving an opportunity afforded by some opening in the trees, the Englishman would pause for a moment to get the bearing of the sun, and thus assured, he pressed in the same course that he had calculated when he first left the main path would at least bring him out upon the river and near to the city of Bronts itself.

And now Robert Stanley found that his utmost eloquence and judgment had become necessary in order to encourage and sustain his already nearly exhausted companion, for within the last half hour the robbers' signal had grown nearer and nearer to them; their pursuers seemed to realize the route that the fugitives would naturally take, at least so far as it regarded direction; but the trouble was, to find them even when this was understood, so dense were the woods, and so unbeaten the path. Suddenly they were startled by an echo so nearly in the very way before them, that the Englishman laid his hand upon the lady Gustine's arm and drew her quickly back, while both now crouched as low as possible in a friendly thicket, more dense and impenetrable than those about it.

"That signal was very near us," whispered the lady, with a blanched cheek.

"It was, but do not fear; the man is alone, and I am his match if necessary."

"Hark!" said the lady, still trembling as she heard the approach of some one.

"They have followed out the path to the highway on their horses, and finding that we are not there, they suspect the game we have really played them, and now they are beating the woods in the direction of Bronts," said the Englishman.

"Heaven protect us," said the lady Gustine, at this moment, in a whisper, as they observed the sentinel whom they had passed early that morning at the cave, now passing along among the bushes and the underwood close by their very sides. What a fearful moment was that, and how the heart of either throbbed within their breasts at this critical moment.

Stanley instinctively drew a pistol from his

belt, but upon second thought he checked himself, for though he might with the utmost ease have selected his aim and put a ball through the robber's heart, the report of the pistol would serve as a signal for the entire pursuing party, who would thus be led at once upon them. Thus reasoning, the Englishman returned the weapon to its place, but kept his eye cautiously bent upon the person of their pursuer, who still carried on his search most industriously.

The lady Gustine made a slight involuntary movement, when a dry twig broke beneath her feet. Nothing could have been done more unfortunate at that time; they were betrayed, and the robber's eyes were upon them both in an instant!

There was no time for parley now; one single moment of delay might prove fatal; not a second of time must be lost. Already was the robber's signal to his lips, while he drew a pistol with his other hand. If that signal was given all was lost. It was a matter of life and death with the Englishman and his fair companion, and, like a panther leaping upon his prey, with one bound Stanley was at the robber's side, one hand clasping his throat with the grasp of a Hercules, and with the other he planted his dagger deep within his enemy's heart. It was a blow so keen and fatal that the wounded man fell without a struggle, and uttering one deep sigh and groan, he was dead! even while the fierce grip of the Englishman was still upon his throat!

Robert Stanley unloosed his grasp and gazed, with a heaving breast, upon the deed he had done. He had known the man for some weeks past as a boon companion, and had listened to his stories, had drunk wine with him at the cave, and interchanged a jovial song now and then, little thinking at the time that their rude acquaintance would close thus in a deadly struggle. "It could not be helped," said he to himself," our own safety and perhaps my life depended upon the deed. God forgive me," continued he, as he composed the limbs of the body and drew it one side into the leaves and thick bushes, before he should leave it there alone to feed the wolves that infest the forest.

"Is he dead?" asked the lady, uncovering her hands from her face, as the Englishman returned to her side once more.

"He is," replied her companion, with a compressed lip, for it was no congenial business that he had performed.

"O, this is very fearful," sighed lady Gustine—"what will be the end of it all?"

"We must press on, lady Gustine, and hope for the best. Do you feel able to make the effort?" said the Englishman, as he gathered a handful of dry leaves and wiped the tell-tale blood from his dagger.

"I will try, Mr. Stanley, and do the best that I can, but I am very, very sick."

After returning once more to the body of the man he had slain, and having fully satisfied himself that all life was extinct in his veins, he raised the trembling and nearly fainting Gustine to her feet, and led her on again towards the east, feeling confident that every step they passed brought them still nearer to Bronts. But it was a long journey yet for such weary limbs to perform.

The signals of the pursuing party had grown gradually fainter and less frequent as the two advanced, until at last it became evident to them that they were not sought in the direction which they were pursuing; this was very satisfactory, but they needed every possible encouragement, for lady Gustine had now become so fatigued that she could advance but with the utmost difficulty, and by being almost entirely supported by her companion, who still cheered her on with a promise that they would soon reach Bronts.

The noon was already past, and the night was coming on apace, when the Englishman became convinced that lady Gustine could go no further until she had been revived by sleep. He dreaded for her sake to pass the night in the forest, where under the most propitious circumstances she would suffer great exposure, but he saw that this would doubtless be necessary, and he therefore prepared her mind for the purpose. Far too much exhausted to argue against the plan of bivouacking among the trees, even had she felt any disinclination to do so, the lady quietly acquiesced in his suggestions and efforts for her comfort.

It required but a short time for him to collect a bed of dried leaves and mosses, and upon these he gently laid the exhausted person of his companion, at the same time prevailing upon her to partake, though sparingly,

of the remnants of the provisions that remained in his pack, and also to drink a little wine. The latter was of a choice kind and had the effect to revive and strengthen her not a little. Driving four upright stakes into the ground, the Englishman formed a rude cabin, covered over with boughs and twigs, and building the like substances against the sides, leaving only the front open, he formed a close shelter that would shut out the dew and the gusts of the cool night air. Having completed this secure though temporary shelter, he prevailed upon the lady to take another draught of wine as the night gradually clothed the wood in darkness, and seating himself at the entrance of the little rude cabin he had formed for her protection, he bade her sleep in peace, for that no harm would now come to her in any shape.

Not even her fear and anxiety could keep the lady Gustine awake. The lassitude and over fatigue of her frame overcame all else, and she dropped to sleep as soundly, ay, more so perhaps, than she had ever done before.

Fearing the approach of wolves, which might have tracked them to the spot, the Englishman prepared his weapons ready to his hands, and resolved to keep awake to protect his fair charge from any danger that might occur, and he did so for hours, listening to her deep, regular breathing, and watching by the dim light of the stars the strange, wild figures that the branches of the trees formed themselves into, as seen against the blue sky above. Thus he mused alone by himself, until at last his eyes blurred with fatigue, and he closed them now and then for a moment, just to ease them, and every time he did so it became harder and harder for him to open them again, until finally he forgot to make the effort, and his head rested against the stakes he had raised, and he slept.

Was he dreaming or what made him start so?

> "Hark!—is that the angry howl
> Of the wolf, the hills among?
> Or the hooting of the owl,
> On his leafy cradle swung?"

It was past midnight, some rustling noise and a low growl sounded clear to his ears. Though half asleep he grasped a pistol and cocking it, peered through the darkness. Before him, within ten feet of his person, he discovered a pair of fiery eye-balls glaring upon him.—Waking so from a sound sleep, he hardly knew at first what to think, and it was almost a minute before he could recall the circumstances of his present situation. But there still glared those eye-balls upon him, and he almost fancied that he felt the hot breath of the creature upon his face—a few moments sufficed to convince him that it was a huge wolf. Should he fire at it? Were there not more of them, and if so, the killing of one might bring the whole pack upon him. He knew not what to do, but soon the stealthy creature crept *nearer*, the inclination was irresistible. He aimed between those glaring eye-balls and awaiting until the wolf had lessened the first named distance one half, he fired; a hoarse growl followed, and the creature rolled over lifeless among the dead twigs and dried leaves of the forest. A few moments' pause showed the Englishman that the wolf was alone, a stray animal from the pack now most likely feeding upon the robber's body which they had left behind.

The excitement caused by this encounter, and the reloading of his pistol, served to thoroughly awake him, though the report did not produce a like effect upon the lady, who was too much overcome by fatigue to wake lightly. Once more he took his station before the entrance to the rude cabin, resolved this time to keep awake; but nature again asserted her power, and the tired fugitive slept.

What a sweet blessing is sleep! How silently and yet how surely it produces its effect, refreshing the body and the mind! How substantially it invigorates the system, renewing the faculties for fresh exertion and achievement; how necessary and acceptable a dispensation of Providence is this refreshing insensibility. The sun was high in the heavens on the following morning, when Robert Stanley awoke. Already had his fair charge been some time stirring, and having arranged her dress and bathed her hands and face in a clear rivulet that threaded the forest hard by, she had come and sat down near to his side to await the moment of his waking. She would not disturb him, for she knew that he must have watched over her safety for the better part of the night—how faithfully, the dead carcass of the wolf told most vividly.

"Why, lady Gustine, are you already up

and waiting for me?" he asked, starting up and rubbing his eyes in surprise, to think he had slept so long. "I am but a sorry sentinel, for in spite of all my resolves, I dropped away at last; but really I am much refreshed by my slumber."

"Indeed, you must have sorely needed sleep, for your task has been a doubly tedious one, and I rejoice that you have had even a partial opportunity to resuscitate your strength. But I see," she continued, pointing to the body of the wolf, "that you were not unemployed even while I was sleeping, Mr. Stanley."

"It was only a cowardly wolf that had followed our track. A single shot sufficed to lay him there as you see."

"A most fortunate shot, too, Mr. Stanley, for they are considered very dangerous in these woods at night."

"But how fare you, lady, after your extreme fatigue and last night's exposure?"

"Much better than I could believe. I feel this morning as though I could walk a league."

"Heaven be praised, for unless we can get to the river ere long, we may starve in the forest. Half the distance you name, I should think, would bring us to Bronts," replied her companion.

They shared the last biscuit together, and the small bit of dried meat that was left in the wallet. It had been carefully saved from the little left for the supper on the previous evening, and the lady, spite of her fatigue and the anxiety that still beset her mind, thought she had never tasted a sweeter morsel in her life. Hunger is a rich sauce. Having thus slightly satiated their appetites, they once more renewed their steps towards the east. The Englishman had judged well, for although they moved very slowly, partly from the uncertainty of the path, and partly from the soreness and lameness that half benumbed their limbs, yet before noon, they began to discover evidences that showed them they were near the river and the habitations of the peasantry. Though lady Gustine's feet were sadly swollen, and her limbs almost too weak to support her, yet the cheering prospect of once more reaching her home in safety, bore her up, and she seemed to lean even less heavily as they advanced, on the arm that had aided her so constantly, and to heed her pains not at all.

"Stop here for a moment," said her companion, ascending a little rise of ground on the side of their path.

"What see you?" she asked, anxiously; "aught that betokens hope to us?"

"I think so, lady; we must be near the town, or else my eyes deceive me."

"God grant it," said lady Gustine, faintly, as her companion helped her to ascend the little hillock.

"Good cheer, lady," said Robert Stanley, again. "I see yonder the turrets of a castle upon the cliff."

"Thank heaven, thank heaven," she replied, "it is the castle of Ghertstein."

"Lady, rouse thee," said her companion, striving to recall her fainting consciousness.

But her powers of endurance, her resolution and spirits had been tried to the utmost tension, and now within sight of her very home they relaxed, and the lady Gustine fainted in the arms of her companion. We have already described the Englishman as being very strong, and now incited by their near approach to assistance and safety, he lifted her in his arms and bore her forward for a considerable distance, until he arrived at a humble cottage near the river's bank, where he resigned his charge to the care of a couple of her own sex, and sank for a moment, himself almost exhausted upon a seat.

"Holy Mother!" exclaimed one of the peasants, in wonder, "it is our lady Gustine, who has been lost, and for whom the lord, her father, has mourned so bitterly. O, sir, whence comes she in this sad condition?"

"No matter about that now," replied the Englishman, "give heed to her present state. Bring water and loosen her dress."

"That we will, and at once," replied the willing, but simple people of the cottage.

The ordinary restoratives soon restored the consciousness of the lady Gustine, and some warm and simple nutriment revived her nearly exhausted physical powers, while a message which was at once despatched to the castle, brought almost immediately her father to her side, to embrace and weep over the child he had feared was lost to him forever. A word sufficed to explain all that was requisite on the moment, and within the hour the lady was

conveyed upon a litter to the repose and comfort of her own chamber in the castle, the father insisting upon the presence of her deliverer.

Lady Gustine had suffered so severely both in body and in mind, that her powers were completely prostrate, and it was only by the kindest and most judicious nursing that a raging fever was averted, as the result of her exposure and suffering.

Robert Stanley had no difficulty in establishing himself and his identity, though he had been, as we have seen, so cunningly forestalled by the robber chief. The lord of Ghertstein would permit him to make no place but the castle his home, and seemed to exhaust invention that he might do him honor, and render him contented and comfortable, in part payment for the invaluable service he had rendered to his child. The sharing of such strange and wild vicissitudes together had done more to unite the feelings of Gustine and Robert Stanley, than months of ordinary intercourse could possibly have done. Within his own heart the Englishman realized that he loved the lady devotedly, and his stay at the castle was therefore a most agreeable pleasure to him.

There is no condition in which a beautiful woman looks more interesting than when she is recovering from sickness, and she appears with a pale cheek and languid air for the first time since her indisposition, in the drawing room. The tender solicitude that is naturally indulged in by the heart and tongue, heightens the interest, and the loved one is doubly dear to all. It was at such a time as this that Robert Stanley met the lady Gustine on the day that she first came from the close confinement of her chamber, and as her pale cheek flushed at the meeting, she gave him her hand, which he pressed respectfully, but tenderly to his lips, reading as he did so, the kindest and gentlest thoughts beaming from those fair blue eyes upon him. Words were but feeble to express their feelings at such a moment, and leading her to a broad lounge, the Englishman sat by her side, with one of her hands held in his own, but saying scarcely a word the while. His heart was dumb with eloquence.

Leaving the lady Gustine and Robert Stanley, as they probably would themselves wish us to do so, alone, we will go back with the reader for a single moment, to the strong hold of the banditti in the depth of the forest.

The two fugitives had been absent from the cave but little more than an hour, when the watchful eye of Karl Blasius, whose custom it was to rise early and examine into all matters carefully for himself, discovered the condition of the priest. A suspicion of the truth at once flashed across his mind, and hastening to the cell where the lady Gustine had been confined, his worst fears were realized, for the bird had flown, and its cage was empty. Rushing in no pleasant mood to the sentinel, who still kept watch at the entrance of the cave, and striving to repress his excitement, the enraged robber asked sternly:

"Who has passed you out of the cave this morning. Do you know?"

"Yes, captain."

"Well, who?"

"The priest and the Englishman," replied the sentinel, in amazement.

"Fool," said the robber, in a whirlwind of passion. "It was the lady prisoner who went out in the priest's dress. Have you no eyes, no caution, that prisoners can pass you unchallenged. and at such an hour?"

"We were told, captain, that the Englishman and the priest would have been together this morning, and we had orders yesterday to pass him unchallenged, and it was so early that—"

"Enough, enough, the evil has occurred, discussion will now do no good; but we must see how far we can retrieve the mischief your carelessness has brought upon us. How long since they passed you?"

"An hour, perhaps."

"An hour, it is a good start," said the robber, musing for a moment on the chances in his favor. "Throw up your post, and get to saddle at once; the road to the highway must first be followed."

The robber put his bugle to his lips, and blew a blast in the cave that made every soul in it start to their feet. They were too well accustomed to be called upon suddenly, not to understand how to complete a hasty toilet, and in five minutes after that bugle note had sounded, forty men armed to the teeth, were scouring the paths and defiles of the forest in pursuit of the fugitives.

CHAPTER XX.

THE LORD OF GHERTSTEIN'S STORY.

"Is it e'en so?—Why then,
Live on—thou hast the arrow at thy heart!
Fix not on me thy sad reproachful eyes,
I mean not to betray thee. Thou mayst live!
Didst thou ask
If Raymond, too, must die?—It is as sure
As that his blood is on thy head."

In the meantime, Robert Stanley became daily more domesticated at Ghertstein's castle, passing the fire-side hours with Gustine and her father, while the latter seemed never tired of relating the many legends and stories that he remembered of the Rhine Valley. One soft, moonlight night, when the three were gathered at the ample portico that overlooked the river and the valley for miles, the lord of Ghertstein replied to their soliciting for one of his Rhine legends, that he would relate one that was told him by his old tutor, the astrologer Zimbach, of Hardheim castle, and assuming an easy position, he related it as nearly as possible in the tutor's own words:

"The day was warm and murky—the atmosphere dense and almost suffocating in its breezeless stillness—the sun had hidden his face, and thick, lowering clouds, rolled heavily along the horizon, evidently betokening a coming storm. The birds flew uneasily from tree to tree, and a wild, mysterious air seemed to pervade all things, for it is of the Hartz forest that I am telling you.

"Wolfgang Herkmer, a young German student, having left the university, was travelling towards his home to see his aged parents and his darling little sister, the pretty Migrette; but as he observed these tempestuous signs, he cast his eyes anxiously upwards, and hastened his pace, in hopes before nightfall to leave the dark gloomy forest behind him. For he was no stranger to the wild and frightful tales of these localities, and many arguments had been made by his friends at his starting, to dissuade him from venturing upon this route alone. But Wolfgang was of a brave and adventurous spirit. This was his nearest route, and he had nothing to tempt the cupidity of the outlaws, but the little pack which he carried, containing his slender wardrobe and a few groschen.

"He had travelled thus far, perhaps nearly two thirds of the way, through the forest unmolested, and had nearly dismissed from his mind all thoughts of danger, when he heard the growling of what appeared to him to be wolves, and that, too, very near to him.—Wolfgang looked in all directions, but he could discover nothing, while the stillness that followed and pervaded the forest, seemed most ominous. The clouds now grew more and more threatening, and seemed ready instantly to drop their burthen upon the thirsting earth. The young student was, like most German students of those days, strongly tinctured with superstition, and he now hurried on, muttering to himself:

"'Well, well, it is evident that I have nothing to fear from brigands and highwaymen.

The fairies are holding their revels doubtless, and are angry that their precincts should be thus invaded by mortal footsteps. The fairies are very beautiful, very pretty little sprites, and surely I need not fear them.'

"At this moment, he was startled by the low, hoarse growl of a wolf, and before he could turn round, he felt his arms pinioned close to his body by the huge paws of one, while another tightly embraced his legs. He was then lifted up, supernaturally it seemed to him, for it was now grown suddenly so dark that he could distinguish nothing, but still he felt the pressure upon his arms and limbs. At this moment too he was conscious of inhaling a sweet, but very powerful perfume, while a delightful sensation suffused his whole frame; a mist seemed gradually to cover his eyes; he tried in vain to speak, for his tongue seemed utterly paralyzed, and a dizziness and subsequent insensibility stole over his frame.

* * * *

"'Softly, softly, Bobbis, do you not see that his delicate skin is all unused to such harsh treatment? Apply your restoratives and frictions more gently, or in restoring his consciousness, you will make a cripple of him for life. There, he revives a little. I' faith, that was too powerful a dose for him, and I feared that we had given him his quietus.'

"'Well, what matter if it were so,' growled Bobbis, a hideous dwarf, whose immense head, covered by a shock of stiff, reddish looking bristles, was thrust into the face of Wolfgang, who lay extended upon a rude bed in a still ruder looking cell or hole. The dwarf once more bent his ear towards the mouth of the prostrate man, and after listening silently thus for a single moment, muttered surlily:

"'No danger, he's breathing fast enough, and take my word for it, if you let him live, he will yet be the means of bringing all of us —you know where, well enough."

"'Peace, fool; did you ever know me willingly and needlessly to take life? I had a use for the student, or I should not have brought him here. I warn you on your peril, harm him not. Do you hear, dolt?'

"'Master, I obey,' replied the dwarf, humbly, as he cowered before the eye that was bent upon him.

"Gernhault, the one whom the dwarf addressed as his master, was a noble specimen of a man, in his physical developments. Tall and athletic in his frame, his form was moulded to the perfect proportions of symmetry, and his countenance, almost superhuman in its beauty, was illumined by an eye which seemed to read the very soul of those on whom it was fixed, but which was nevertheless at times almost mournfully tender in its expression.—His whole countenance bore the stamp of intellect and of great energy, but it was a face also that puzzled the careful observer, almost as much as it interested. One could not but fear as he gazed, that the noble impulses were too frequently checked by the passionate.—But his character will develope itself.

"The place to which Wolfgang had been borne, was a cavern in the recesses of a rock in the Hartz forest. It was not, as many of those caverns were said to be, immensely large and extending a great distance underground, for most of these were well known to the authorities, and had been effectually scoured. But this rock one would never have thought of as affording concealment for any number of persons. It was comparatively so small, and so unlike all those which had heretofore afforded shelter to the prowling brigands of the forest, who had ever abounded in this mysterious wood and its vicinity.

"The surface of the rock was small, and the greater part was taken up by a sort of natural trap door, half concealed by the rank growth of vegetation about it, and which led to a subterranean vault or passage, which had been divided into three compartments, one corresponding with that in which Wolfgang had been placed, and one very much larger, where now reclined, upon the bare earth, about a dozen stalwart men, dressed in the fanciful style of roving soldiers or banditti.—Around the cave were suspended cutlasses, sabres, daggers and swords, different kinds of fire arms, pistols and the like—besides which the men were completely armed.

"In one corner of this apartment sat a man of apparently fifty years of age whose strong resemblance in his general features to Gernhault, at once proclaimed him a near relation. He sat with his eyes bent upon the ground, and his whole attitude denoting the deepest dejection. On the table before him, were numerous diminutive vials, containing powders of various colors, and a large leaden box at

his side was filled with the implements necessary to the chemist. A crucible, from which the coals were now dying out, and the faint, sickly odor which filled the cavern, plainly indicated that he had just been engaged in distilling some powerful elixir, perhaps in its effect as potent as the most subtle narcotics and poisons of the famed Catherine de Medicis. A hand softly laid upon his shoulder, caused him to look up, when a tender and affectionate smile at once irradiated his features at sight of the gentle intruder who now stood by his side.

"'Ah! Lulu, my pet, my blossom, it is time that thou wert slumbering. Come, ma petite, let me see thee on thy couch. Surely Gernhault did not call for thy assistance, to aid the young stranger.'

"'Ah! no, my father, Gernhault has just induced him to take some wine, and on being promised that no harm should come to him, he has fallen into a natural and profound slumber. But thou, my father, seemest so unhappy to-night, and hast remained so long over thy drugs and potions, that I could not rest until I saw thee leave them.'

"'My sweet and gentle Lulu, thou art ever most dear to me,' replied the father, kissing her fair cheek.

"And surely never was moulded a lovelier creature, than she on whom the doting father now gazed with rapture. The small, classically formed head was covered with a profusion of golden, sunny ringlets, which fell in their rich luxuriance over her shoulders to her very waist; her forehead, white and polished as ivory, was singularly high, giving an expression of dignity to her face, which otherwise, so small and delicate were the features, might have seemed to lack expression. But her eyes, large, dark and lustrous, were like those of her brother Gernhault, wonderfully beautiful, forming a singular contrast to her sunny hair. She was very, very pale, probably owing to the want of outdoor exercise and of the light of heaven, which never penetrated the cave, huge iron lamps affording the necessary artificial light, and which were never permitted to go out day or night. Lulu was of a medium height, but her form was most fragile in its proportions.

The apartment to which her father now led her for repose, formed a striking contrast to the rest of the cave. It was very small, but was most luxuriously and tastefully furnished, and her little down bed was encircled by thick silk curtains, which most effectually shielded it from the dampness of the cave. The floor or stony bottom of the cave was covered with many thicknesses of wolf skins, over which was spread a light woven carpet of woollen fabric. After obtaining a promise from Lulu, that she would retire at once to repose, the father left her, and carefully arranging the iron door of the entrance to the little room, passed into the outer cave, and bidding the dwarf go and lie down, he beckoned Gernhault to his side:

"'Art sure, my boy, that the young stranger sleeps soundly now?'

"'Yes; the effect of the drug has not yet passed off, and he is now in a sleep that will not break until the sun has mounted high to-morrow.'

"'That is well, and all is as it should be,' said the father, earnestly.

"'But what of the other enterprise, father?' asked Gernhault.

"'In four hours we shall set forth on our path to the castle. I would I could shake off this melancholy, which more than usually oppresses me this evening. But thoughts of *her* always affect me thus, and did I not feel certain that young Egbert shall not come to harm among us, I fear even the sweet prospect of revenge would be insufficient to—'

"'Why, father,' interrupted Gernhault, fiercely, 'talk not thus. I have sworn on my sword to be richly revenged on the ravisher of my mother, and by the powers of darkness, no womanly squeamishness shall interfere to prevent the fulfilment of my vow. And if,' continued he, intensely excited, 'you need any incitement to this deed, you have but to gaze on this.'

"As he spoke, Gernhault pressed his finger on a ledge of wooden frame-work, fitted into the rock, and so closed as to exactly resemble it, when the board flew back, and disclosed the portrait of a beautiful woman in the bloom of youthful beauty. To her side she pressed with exulting fondness, a little girl of perhaps two summers, while a boy, some three years older, leaning on her knee, played with the rich jewels, with which her lovely arms were decorated.

"'Such,' continued Gernhault, 'was my mother, ere the villain Ingald Aldema came with his false protestations and his wily flattery to beguile her from her duty, and which had ever before constituted her pleasure.—Ah! my father, I see that I need say no more—your thirst for revenge is once more revived. Say, my father, if this be not so?'

"But Gernhault had no further need to incite his father by these reminiscences, for Kluften now stood gazing on the picture, his eye-balls distended and bloodshot, his face crimsoned with excitement, while big drops of perspiration rolled down his cheeks. He clutched nervously his sword, and turning round to Gernhault, said in a hoarse whisper:

"'It is enough—and I am ready;' then turning from him, he abruptly left the spot.

* * * *

"'Well, Alfred,' said the lord of Lurnbeg, as he sat with his attendants at a large oaken table, on which were immense trenchers of beef, flanked on either side by large patties of bears' meat and rabbit stews, while the bowl in the centre and the foaming silver flagons at each plate, gave indications that the banquet would continue till a late hour, 'what luck at the chase to-day? I have but ill brooked the sound of the many huntsmen's horns, and the cheering barking of our faithful dogs, knowing the while that this accursed lumbago in my foot prevents me from joining thee. I warrant me thou hadst fine sport.—Eh, knave?'

"'In truth, yes, my lord; we wanted but your presence to-day, for the complete perfection of the sport. But the learned Gruno says his drugs will soon work healing to thy lameness, if, my lord, thou wilt but diet as he counsels thee.'

"'Peace, varlet, the rich wine I will have; and the old dotard, Gruno, shall still cure me, or by my sword, let him look to himself.—But enough of this. Come, hurrah for a song:

"'The sparkling, ruby wine,
The produce of the vine,
Will drive from our hearts all sorrow;
Fill each glass to the brim,
N'er heed old Gruno's whim,
Not a care will we have for the morrow.
Then fill to the brim, &c.'

And thus with song and jest, the revelry was kept up until a late hour, and the lord of Lurnbeg was at last borne to his couch by two of his menials, while his retainers and friends lay overpowered by the wine on the bare oaken planks of the banquet room.

"All was hushed and still in the castle. In a high room in one side of the western turret, young Egbert—son of the lord of Lurnbeg and of the beauteous Ildegruda, whom he had so artfully cajoled from her doting husband, even while sharing his hospitality—pursued his midnight studies. At last overpowered by fatigue and drowsiness, his head dropped upon the book before him, and he sank into a heavy slumber, from which he was aroused by feeling his arms tightly pinioned. On looking about him as soon as his eyes were fairly open, he distinguished the figures of some eight or ten men, all armed at every point. He was about to shout for assistance, when one, who was apparently the leader, instantly put his hand upon his mouth, saying in his ear:

"'Hush! make no resistance and I swear on my sword thou shalt not be harmed, otherwise, look around you and judge if you can escape us. Will you give me your solemn promise, that if I release my hold, you will quietly refrain from uttering a syllable, and will do as I direct? I warn you that when once the passion of my followers is up and aroused by resistance, I even cannot control their passions, and the object of their dislike must die. I have warned you—have I your promise?'

"Egbert, seeing no alternative, and trusting to Providence and his wits to enable him ere long to make his escape from his captors, nodded his head in token of assent to the leader's question.

"Gernhault, for it was he, instantly removed his hand from Egbert's lips, and beckoned to two of his men, who lifted their prisoner at once upon their arms, and in the next moment a potion of the same powder which had so powerfully affected Wolfgang, was placed upon his lips, and he was borne away in a state of complete insensibility, by the two men who had raised him at Gernhault's orders. Nor did they lay him down except upon the horse, and then he was borne away to the cave in the Hartz forest.

"In the meantime, Gernhault and his father proceeded at once to the sleeping apartment

of Rheitzmar, the lord of Lurnbeg, leaving the rest of the men to watch near the door of the servants' halls, the huge chains to which they had already secured. The old lord was soon aroused by their flaming torches, which cast a brilliant light through the gloomy chamber, for he had, in spite of his boasts, drank much less wine than the others, and had already slept off not a small share of its effects. At the sight of the two armed men, then standing before him, he at once started up on his couch, and gave utterance to a yell of rage and fear. At this moment, Kluften, wrought up to fury by the sight of the man who had so basely betrayed his hospitality, by stealing his idolized wife from his heart, clenched the old man's throat in his grasp as though it had been one of iron, and muttered between his teeth:

"'Villain! Base betrayer! At last I have thee in my power! Revenge has been long delayed to my panting heart, but it is sweet to the taste at last. Didst think, old man, because thou hadst remained unmolested these many long years, Kluften would forego his revenge? Ha! thou wilt find thy mistake at last. While Ildegruda lived, my foolish love for her, which even her desertion could not estrange, kept me from harming thee, while the long war has afforded me and my brave Gernhault some little respite from our gloomy thoughts. But now, base worm, I will punish thee in a fitting manner. Thou shalt not die; that were too light a doom for thee. Wouldst thou know thy miserable fate?' he now almost whispered, having grown perfectly furious in his passion. 'I will tell thee, villain:

"'Thou rememberest the Donheist stone in the centre of the Black forest, and knowest also that its cavity is just large enough to allow of the entrance of a single person. There thou shalt lie chained. But thou art not to starve—death would then relieve thee speedily. Bread and water shall be supplied to thee by my Invisibles; and now, old man, learn thy worst punishment: Egbert, thy idolized son—nay, start not at the mention of his name; well do I know thy doting fondness for the boy,—Egbert is condemned to an imprisonment hopeless as thine own. I have said.—Gernhault, thy bugle.'

"At the first faint blast upon the instrument, his followers, who had been impatiently expecting the summons, filed into the room, and lifting the old man as they had done Egbert, after rendering him insensible in a like manner, they bore him away to the forest cave, not having even disturbed the slumbers of the sottish menials of the castle.

* * * *

"'Now Wolfgang,' said Kluften, 'I have told thee all my story. Thou mayst think me too severe and revengeful in my administration of justice; but this matter we will not discuss. I will tell thee why thou wert brought hither by two of my men, disguised in wolf skins. I wish the boy, Egbert, to have every care and attention suited to his future rank, for at a fitting time I shall claim for him his father's broad lands and castles. I have fitted up rooms in the old ruin hard by, called by the superstitious, "The Enchanted Tower;" thither I intend to carry Egbert and his mother's daughter, Lulu, and I want thee to attend them, as a faithful tutor. I have marked thee well, this long time past, and have singled thee out for this purpose, because I know that thou art generous, faithful, and fully competent to this task.

"'I would not wound thy feelings, but I know also that thou hast as yet nothing for thy future support. I will enrich thee, for despite the rude appearance of our place of shelter, I have gold in abundance. Thou wilt always sleep here in this cave. This will perhaps seem hard to thee at first, but thou wilt soon become accustomed to it. Now what sayest thou, Wolfgang? I give thee free choice in the matter, only exacting that at all events, you must preserve my secret inviolate. Some of my men shall this night conduct thee safely to thy journey's end, for thou art no doubt anxious to embrace thy mother and sister—you see I am well informed concerning you—and if thou consentest to my proposition, thou wilt sign this paper to that effect. I will meet thee this night week at the little inn near Barstadt—"The Black Wolf"—and return with thee hither.'

"'I agree to thy conditions, unhesitatingly,' replied Wolfgang, for the two brief interviews he had already enjoyed with the enchanting Lulu had served to render the impressive student madly in love with her, and he gladly embraced an offer which held out to

him the sweet certainty of being constantly so near to her. And, thought he, it will go hard in my instructions, but I will find a means of teaching this lovely creature also to love me.

"'Will it content thee to be a pupil of mine?' he asked of Lulu, after it had been decided that he should take charge of her instruction.

"'If it please my father, it must needs please me,' she answered.

"But Wolfgang saw, or he thought he saw, her eyes express that it would render her most happy to study of him.

"'If it please your father, and yet pleaseth not thee, gentle lady, I shall have but a sorry task; for I would have thy good wishes at the outset, else it will be but up-hill work at best.'

"'O, I doubt not we shall agree very well,' replied Lulu, smiling at his earnestness, for Wolfgang spoke from his heart.

"'Where there is a will, there is always a way,' said her companion, 'and I am most resolutely determined both to please thee, and deserve thy father's confidence, which has been so freely bestowed upon me.'

"'Hast forgiven the violent means by which thou wert compelled to stay thy homeward journey, and brought a prisoner hither?'

"'Indeed yes, since it has resulted so happily, and has brought me to the presence and service of one so pure and beautiful as is thy father's daughter.'

"The ready blush leaped to the maiden's cheek, but no frown accompanied it there; it was not the blush of anger, and Wolfgang marked well its import as he gazed lovingly upon her. The truth was, from the very hour of his entrance to the cave, the gentle Lulu had a tender interest in him, partly on account of his fine, manly person and noble face, and partly because such a romantic adventure had brought them together. She knew little of the world, had seen few men, and none so handsome, she thought, as her new instructer, and consequently the field was open at once for the student to prosecute his suit, though he was cautious not to do so too abruptly, but sternly checked the expression of his love by adopting the most discreet and cautious habits of intimacy.

"All was finally arranged as had been proposed. Egbert gradually became accustomed to his situation, and was happy in it, for he knew nothing of his father's punishment.—Gladly, in his thirst for knowledge, did he drink at the rich streams which Wolfgang's learning opened to him. Lulu, too, though her fond father had paid much attention to his child's studies, yet had much to learn of her gentle and attentive instructer. Kluften made 'The Enchanted Tower' his constant home, and Bobbis and his old mother, a wrinkled crone, who had long occupied a wretched hut at the borders of the Black forest, sufficed them as attendants.

"Gernhault, with his men, in obedience to a summons from his military commander, the Duke of Ernfels, again served in the war, from which he had temporarily withdrawn to assist his father in his scheme of revenge.—He won many laurels on the field of battle.—But he was not altogether content; the image of the old prisoner in his terrible dungeon, sometimes came over him with startling vividness, and he at last released him, and had him taken good care of. But he had lost his reason, and died ere long, unknown and unwept.

"How Wolfgang won the love of the gentle Lulu, and at last her father's consent to their marriage, and how Egbert was acknowledged lord of the proud castle of Lurnbeg, gaining all hearts by his nobleness and generosity, I may at some other time tell you.—And thus it was that the round stone in the Black forest came to be named 'The Betrayer's Punishment.'"

CHAPTER XXI.

CAPTURE OF THE BANDITTI.

"The peasant left his vintage,
The shepherd grasped the spear."

In the relation of such old stories and legends as that of the Hartz forest, the time passed pleasantly away at Ghertstein castle, and gradually Robert Stanley became the accepted and acknowledged lover of the fair lady he had served so well. The bold outrage upon the laws by the robber chief, Karl Blasius, in his attempt to carry out his fearful and revengeful plan by dishonoring the lady Gustine, seemed to awaken the neighborhood to a fresh realization of the danger that lurked so near to them. It had been the policy of the brigands heretofore to commit their boldest depredations at a goodly distance from their stronghold, thus in some degree puzzling conjecture as to whence those came who committed the outrage, though they operated constantly on a small scale, in their immediate neighborhood, and from day to day upon the thoughtless travellers.

In relation to this, the boldest attempt for years on the part of the robbers, people said, "if such villany goes unpunished, we are no longer safe in any condition of life. We know not where the next blow may be struck."

The authorities at once got together, and incited by the lord of Ghertstein, not only offered a heavy reward for the head of Karl Blasius, dead or alive, but also resolved to fit out an expedition, strong, well found, and conducted by experienced men, to take him and destroy his nest of outlaws in the forest, and confiscate the proceeds of their robberies. Four of the nearest surrounding districts joined in this enterprise for the public good, and full five hundred regular troops were gathered, prepared and drilled for this special service of attacking the lion in his den.

The information imparted to the authorities by Robert Stanley was of no small importance to them as it regarded guiding them to the cave of the robbers, as well as suggesting various matters relating to the mode of of attack, etc. The peasantry generally were too much indebted to the kindness of Karl Blasius to turn traitor against him, and even the heavy sum offered by the government had no effect in tempting them to play the traitor to one who had been a true friend to them. We have before shown that this was a matter of principle, as well as policy with the robbers, thus to form a host of friends about them, and many are the expeditions against the marauders of the wood that have failed through the false guiding or false information of a simple peasant, who felt that his interests were too much in common with the outlaws, for him to betray them.

So secretly was the expedition managed that was intended to operate against the brigands, that although Karl had information that a body of troops were marching on the highway, he merely took the precaution to draw in his men, but would not for a moment believe that they designed to attack him, until it was also reported that the whole number had struck into the winding path which the lady Gustine had followed, and which led directly to the cave. It was a critical moment with the robbers, but after learning their numbers, Karl, finding that there was no chance to carry off any amount of their valuable booty, resolved to stand by and defend it to the last. The entrance to the cave was narrow, and might by stratagem and bravery be held for days against a superior force. Weighing all the chances carefully in his mind, the captain of the outlaws made his disposition of his men in the best possible manner to effect the objects he had in view.

First a score of good marksmen were sent out to harass and thin out the approaching column of soldiery, and more especially to disable the officers of the expedition. A temporary door was constructed with loop holes at the cavern's mouth, to protect those within from the shot of the attacking party, while it would enable the robbers to keep up a fire on their enemies with their fatal carbines. Of course the approaching party lost a half dozen of their number every few moments by the shots of the skirmishing party, and that, too, without the regular soldiers being able to return their fire, since it came from men in ambush, and who were scattered in all directions, in a wood with which they were perfectly familiar, while their enemies were little better than lost already. But the sight of their dying and wounded comrades acted as a spur to the soldiers, and they hastened furiously on to gain some spot where they might come hand to hand with the enemy, for as yet not a single gun had been discharged from their ranks, and they were burning with impatience.

The skirmishers retreated before the advancing party until they had nearly reached the mouth of the cave, when they fired their last volley among the soldiers, and rushed in to join their companions. The heavy oaken door was then raised, and the robbers were comparatively protected for the time being, from their enemy's fire. Karl Blasius had been well informed by his spies of the strength of the approaching party, and also concerning their armament, but his spies had forgotten to mention one most important item, viz., that the column had brought with it a small howitzer, upon, or rather between two mules; a gun capable of carrying a six pound ball. The first intimation the robbers had that such a formidable weapon was brought to annoy them, was the moment when it was first discharged, double loaded, at the mouth of the cavern. But the robbers, though satisfied that their time had at last come, resolved to fight to the last, asking for no quarter, and selling their lives dearly.

At last the fight became a hand to hand one, and the robbers, tired of their hiding place which the howitzer had rendered so uncomfortable—for it had first driven them from the entrance and was then planted at the mouth of the cave—rushed forth to attack their enemies on the open lawn. The struggle was a fearful one, but numbers at last outweighed valor and desperation, and, one by one, the robbers were either laid low or captured and bound. Finally, Karl Blasius himself, wounded in a dozen places, was at last secured and bound, fainting, and bleeding at a dozen ghastly wounds in various parts of his body. He was borne in triumph through the town of Bronts, and conveyed, with the surviving members of his band, to prison, amid the shouts of the excited populace.

It was to the prison of Amantz, which towers at such a height above the river's course below Bronts, that the brigand chief and his followers were conducted, and here they were incarcerated in its most secure dungeons, loaded with chains and carefully watched over by turnkeys and guards, nor were they permitted to communicate to each other, or with persons from without. This was in those days of civil commotions, when revolutions and civil wars were of constant occurrence. Just at this period, or rather not long subsequent to it, a sudden state of open hostility broke out between the different sections of the country, and soldiers of course being much in demand, and very scarce withal, the banditti who had been taken with Karl Blasius were pardoned, on condition of their taking the oath of allegi-

ance and performing faithfully the duty of soldiers in the regular service of the state. Their leader of course was deemed too dangerous a man to trust at large, and was therefore kept a prisoner until the character of the times should give chance for a formal trial.

As the robber lay in his solitary prison, alone and unheeded, save by his jailor, he found how deeply he had loved the fair lady Gustine. He realized that such an affection, could it have been earlier experienced, might have made him a very different man, for even now, though entirely hopeless, yet it changed the whole course of his thoughts, and her image was constantly before him. The short time during which he had been honorably received at her father's castle, had served so to imprint her image upon his heart, that, villain as he was, he would never forget the gentle influence of those lovely eyes, the beauty and intellectual expression of those features, and the form that seemed to him the perfection of all female loveliness. These memories had utterly changed the brigand; his antipathy to the laws was gone, his hatred for the rich seemed to be forgotten—ambition, hope, all his finer feelings were changed. He had never loved before. It was his first and his last affection.

The jailor of Amantz was sometimes forced to relieve the guard that stood over the wing where Karl was confined, and after going his rounds and satisfying himself that all was secure, he not unfrequently entered his cell to talk with one who had made himself so famous by his crimes, and to whom so much curiosity and romantic interest attached itself. Sometimes the jailor would relate some story to while away the time, and more than once even the robber himself, grateful for company of any sort, had related some startling anecdote to amuse and attract the jailor. It was on the occasion of one of these meetings that Karl demanded of the jailor to fulfil a promise he had some time before made to him that he would relate the history of a former tenant of this very cell.

"Come, jailor," said he, "the time lays heavily on me here; how about that Rhine legend that you promised to relate to me in payment for my last adventure I told you of in the upper valley upon the Crutz castle?"

"True, I did promise thee a story in return for that relation; but mine draws upon the past, and is not a story of personal adventure like yours; mine was told me by my predecessor here, and true or not true, he vouched for it."

"It would be a downright sacrilege to doubt a Rhine legend," said the robber chief, laughing ironically as he said so. "But what was it about?"

"It is about Count Rolfe, the former lord of this castle and his daughter, as lovely a lady, it is said, as ever breathed the air of the valley."

"Did the old rogue kill his daughter because she loved below her rank?" asked the robber, trying to forestall the jailor in his story.

"No, no; you must let me tell the story in my own way," said the turnkey—"and not begin at the wrong end of it either."

"True, I was anticipating," answered Karl Blasius, smiling.

"But hark, there is the north turret bell," said the jailor. "It is time to see the guard relieved, and then I will drop in and tell thee the whole story of the proud Count Rolfe and his lovely daughter."

"Come quickly, for I am weary, weary, very," said the robber, clanking his chains, and staggering under their weight.

"I'll be with you anon."

The robber chief had made the jailor his friend in one sense of the word, because he had managed to interest him by the relation of his own startling adventures, a description of conversation that had completely captivated the jailor's fancy. Consequently, although he did not remit the severity, to any great degree, that the authorities had imposed upon the prisoner, yet, in payment for the stories that he had heard from his lips, he also would relate tales and legends of their native valley.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE JAILOR'S STORY.

"A story of the olden time."

"MANY years ago," commenced the jailor, "there was here imprisoned a gallant knight who had incurred the vengeance of the haughty Count Rolfe, who was then lord of this castle, and all the region round about it. Count Rolfe was a proud, stern man, of a swarthy countenance and a fierce, gleaming eye; and it was currently reported that he dealt with things which it did not befit mortals to know, or, in other words, that he had made himself master of the arts of magic incantation and power."

"Hold," said the prisoner; "these bars weigh me down; will you not unloose them for a while?"

"Yes, while I am here," replied the jailor, removing the heaviest of the bar chains by unloosing them.

"Good," said the robber, satisfied even at this partial release, and stretching his arms with satisfaction. "Now go on again."

"Well, this count Rolfe had an only child, a daughter, who was so perfect a contrast to the haughty chief himself, that observers looked and wondered that one so gentle and so fair could come of such a lineage. Indeed, the beautiful Hildegard partook far more of the spirit of that lovely mother who had in the daughter's early childhood departed for the silence of the tomb; though the courageous spirit of the count had not perhaps entirely failed of giving some tinge to the character of his child.

"It was at the close of a brilliant day of June when the dark-hued count returned with his followers from a distant expedition. They reached the castle, leading in their array the prisoners whom they had secured in their absence. All the inmates of the castle were on the alert to greet the victorious warriors, lining the battlements and turret tops to overlook them, and even the fair Hildegard herself, not willing as yet to show herself among the din and turmoil of a military escort and arrival, leaned lightly forward from her little balconied chamber, to gaze upon the warlike and victorious company. She pitied the unfortunate prisoners, at the same time that her heart exulted with warm animation at the success of her friends. But chief of all those who attracted her attention, was the figure of a youthful knight, led forward with his arms bound ignominiously behind him. His countenance was sad, but not dismayed, and he bore his ill fortune manfully, and with an erect and martial port. His helmet was off,

and his thick auburn locks curled over a noble brow clear as the cloudless heaven, while his dark blue eye and well shaped features bespoke the soul which animated without deceit his fine and well knit form. He was a noble captive to look upon, as he rode thus into the gates.

"Hildegard felt an agitation to which she had heretofore been a stranger, and turning back within the silence of her room, she thought long of the hapless stranger knight, so noble and so handsome; she thought of him as despoiled of his domain and torn from his friends, perhaps to perish within her father's dungeon walls—strangely did the image of the prisoner, his sad countenance and noble bearing, pursue her thoughts by day and her dreams by night.

"'Might she not dare,' thus came the half framed thought, to intercede with her father for the prisoner's safety? She dared not yet to speak of his release, but if she could but feel assured of his bodily safety, and that he was spared from present suffering, that would be much to her gentle woman heart. 'Might she speak to her father of this without offence?'

"And thus she was affrighted at the temerity of her thoughts, the temerity which dared to meddle with the hidden counsels of her terrible sire. Thus her thoughts, sympathies, and fears swayed with agitation her innocent breast, fearful imaginations weighed heavily upon her heart; her soul struggled with vague and undefined dissatisfaction. Hildegard forsook her lute, its strains struck with painful vibrations against her aching bosom. She came to love the soft moonlight, the fleeting clouds in heaven, the pensive glow of dying day, rather than the courtly pastimes that sought to attract her sympathy; often her footfall fell noiselessly upon the castle turrets and battlements, and once when thus engaged, she heard a faint groan come from the dungeon walls. She leaned forward to listen, when again she heard that sad expression of mortal woe. Her heart throbbed violently against its bosom shrine, and its pulsation whispered to the maiden from whom those accents came to which she listened.

"'Sir knight,' said the fair girl, tremulous with mingled fear and pity, 'is it thou—the Knight of Alcanta, who art imprisoned within this dismal cell?'

"There was an instant's pause, when a hollow voice, in words broken by exhaustion and weakness, replied:

"'Yes, gentle one, I am here; thy voice betrayeth thy sex and kindness of heart, and for thy sympathy, I bless thee. O, fair maiden, be thou whom whou wilt, remember in thy prayers one who soon must die.'

"'Die?' echoed the maiden.

"'Ay, already do my spirits sink within me.'

"'Indeed, indeed, this must not be.'

"'Ah, gentle one, it is not for hearts like thine to decide; would that it were so.'

"'No, no, sir knight,' she repeated in agitated tones, 'thou shalt not die thus, immured in a deep and cheerless dungeon. If none else can aid, I myself will rescue thee.'

"'God speed thee, gentle one, but I would not have thee endangered for my poor sake.'

"Hildegard turned to her chamber with a cheek now blushing like the rose, now paling with secret terror, and shutting herself within her apartment alone, she wept long and sorrowfully, until at last she determined to seek her father and strive to bend his iron will, and sue for the liberty of the unfortunate knight. With trembling feet she sought the presence of the count, and humbly knelt before him. The count unbent his haughty brow and raised up his fair child.

"'What is it thou wouldst have of me, my fair daughter?'

"'O, my father,' entreated Hildegard, 'I have a boon to ask of thee: I pray thee be not offended with me. I would that thou might release the Knight of Alcanta, who I fear is now dying, and—'

"'Begone, girl!' exclaimed the surprised parent, interrupting her, while the furious blood rushed to his stormy countenance. 'Alcanta dies to-morrow morn! Go, presumptuous girl, let me not hear again from thy foolish lips such strange and unfitting requests as thou hast just named.'

"Hildegard, terrified at his angry manner, fled from his presence, but in hurrying through a hall that intervened between her father's room and her own, a faintness suddenly came over her limbs, and she sank helpless upon the floor. Immediately a manly arm bore her to a seat, and placing her upon it, offered such restoratives as might revive her. She

soon revived, while Ulerie, the youthful master of the broad lands of Ermstahl, most anxiously regarded the fair maiden, for he loved her devotedly, though he sighed that his love was not returned. As the gentle girl revived, she beheld Ulerie standing before her, when she suddenly knelt at his feet imploringly, and said:

"'O, Ulerie, Ulerie, thou canst help, thou canst help me. Thou wilt, Ulerie, for though I must own that I love another, yet thou art too generous to seek vengeance upon poor Hildegard because her foolish heart hath elsewhere been given O, if ever thou didst love me, Ulerie, then cast not away lightly my entreaty.'

"'What wouldst thou, Hildegard?' exclaimed Ulerie, almost as colorless in feature as the fair suppliant whom he addressed, and whom he gently raised to her feet again.

"'O, Ulerie,' replied the maiden, with husky earnestness of utterance; 'men say that that thou *also* art learned, that thou hast secrets of mighty power which can perform otherwise impossible deeds. I seek not to deal with evil, but I know that thou art too good, too virtuous to tamper with unholy things. O, if thou canst, Ulerie, wilt thou help me?'

"'Perchance I may be able to aid thy wishes, my gentle Hildegard; but alas! what availeth it to me to do so, I who am doomed to perpetual sorrow and heart-ache?'

"'It does avail thee much, very much, Ulerie. Thou canst save *him*, for if he die, my heart will surely break. Ulerie, wilt thou save me?'

"Ulerie sighed heavily, and drawing a silver ring shaped like a serpent, from his little finger, he placed it upon one of her snow-white fingers, and kissing tenderly the hand he held, said:

"'Hildegard, I must obey thy wishes, if only to show thee how truly I still love thee. I know not thy purpose, I ask it not, for your own sake, but I know that if it be in my power to help you, it is through this mystic ring. It was given to my father by the queen of the fairies, to whom he had done a great kindness, and from him I received it with the secret of its strange virtue and power. As long as thou hast it in thy possession, thou canst at any time attain thy lawful wishes, by merely pronouncing the words which I now tell thee.'

"He whispered in her ear, and as she heard the magic words, a soft strain of music seemed to breathe about them, as if to consecrate the secret which had just been imparted to her keeping,.

"'O, Ulerie,' she exclaimed, 'noble-hearted indeed thou art. Mayest thou be happier than ever the companionship of poor Hildegard could make thee, and thou wilt; for are there not many maidens whom thy love would rejoice, maidens far more beautiful, than is she who will never cease to pray for and bless thee?'

"Again offering her hand for his lips, the gentle maiden turned and hurried away with the talisman she had obtained.

"She had gone but a few steps, however, before she paused, not knowing how to proceed in the accomplishment of her object. Heretofore she had only acted from uncalculating impulse, the ardent desire to save the captive knight.

"'O, my talisman,' she exclaimed, 'would that thou hadst the power to direct my steps. But stay, let me not forget the mystic words,' and she slowly repeated them in a whisper.

"Scarcely had she completed the words, when the ring which had seemed to fit her finger tightly, fell off upon the floor, rolling at once towards a door in one corner of the apartment. Hardly did Hildegard touch it with her snow-white hand, when it turned on its hinges, and gave her free passage within. The ring still rolled on before her, until the fair girl came to another door, low and framed of knotty oak, fortified with thick iron bars. Hildegard knew that she was at the entrance of the flight of steps that led to the corridor on which this cell then occupied by the knight of Alcanta was situated.

"But now a beam of lambent flame formed itself in the damp air, and darted against the huge rusty lock which secured the door. The heat was intense, the bolt was melted with the bar and the door opened before the astonished maiden's eyes. With reassured heart as the flame went before her in the air, she took the ring in her hand as she ascended the steps: then an invigorating strength went forth from the fairy gift, and braced her timid heart as she threaded the deep passage. At

last the tiny glittering flame stopped before this door. Hildegard's breath came more quickly, for she felt that this was the abode of the knight whom she sought. Then tremblingly she touched the door, which heavily swung back before her, and she stood in the presence of the prisoner. But the captive heeded not the fair visiter—he lay upon a pallet of straw, chained and insensible.

"Hildegard bent over him, weeping with pity and alarm.

"'Alas!' she said, 'can it be that I am too late? Would that his life and strength were restored, and those rude shackles were cast from off his limbs.'

"Again was the magic ring most powerful; the mystic words had been spoken, the knight arose, a sudden strength invigorated him; he sprang upon his feet, and the chains dropped in fragments upon the floor.

"'Who art thou, fair one?' he exclaimed, gazing with wonder upon her beauty.

"'I am Hildegard.'

"'The daughter of the proud Count Rolfe?' asked the knight.

"'I am his only child.'

"'Alas! that it should be that thou art the child of such as he.'

"'He has indeed been cruel to thee,' said the gentle maiden.

"'But by what strange power do you thus release me, fair maiden?'

"Hildegard replied quickly, though modestly, for she felt that there was no time for delay.

"'Sir knight, by the power of the magic ring which I hold, I am able to release thee. Fly! fly instantly! for I will show thee a free passage from the castle walls, and the means of escape from thence I have already provided. Thou knowest well the character of my father, and woe be to thee and to me if by any chance we are discovered.'

"'Let us away, quickly. Sir knight, follow me at once.'

"'Lead on, dear lady, I will follow thee where thou wilt.'

"Again the ring became their guide, and led them by ways unknown to Hildegard before, until they found themselves without the castle walls at a quiet spot, and where stood a coal-black steed, summoned by the fairy power, pawing the earth and awaiting patiently for its rider to mount. Hildegard turned to the knight with a flushing cheek.

"'Sir knight,' she said, 'the way lays before thee—mayest thou soon be happy with those thou lovest.'

"The knight of Alcanta turned upon Hildegard a mingled look of disappointment and inquiry.

"'Fair maiden, I had thought that thou wast to accompany me. I had fondly supposed that thou wouldst be willing to become the bride of him whom thou hast risked so much to save. I cannot go from here alone without thee.'

"'Fly, fly, quickly, sir knight, before you are discovered and retaken.'

"'Without thee, never,' repeated the knight, as, bending, he raised her to the horse's back with one effort, and in the next moment he was in the saddle, securing the trembling girl with one arm, while with the other he guided the flying steed, as it dashed over the ground at a speed that caused him to seem not to touch the earth at all.

"'Why tremblest thou, Hildegard? Surely thou dost love me, or thou wouldst not have ventured so much in my behalf. Wilt thou not then be the bride of one who will ever love and cherish thee?'

"A sigh only answered the question.

"'Speak, and make me happy, gentle maiden,' said the knight.

"'What can I say at such a fearful moment as this?' she asked.

"'Say only that you love me, gentle one. It is all I ask.'

"A gentle sigh escaped the bosom of Hildegard, as she timidly looked up in the face of the knight, and meeting there naught but truthful and tender love, she bowed her head, and a low murmur parted her lips.

"'I am thine!'

"The knight gently kissed the blushing forehead which pressed against his manly shoulder, while onward flew the coal-black steed, like the whirlwind rushing down the mountain's side.

"'Hark!' said the maiden, in tones of affright, as a sound reached her ears.

"'I hear nothing, gentle one.'

"'Yes, there it is again, the braying of hounds; didst thou not hear it?"

"'Now, I do hear it, Hildegard, but our steed is fleet.'

"'Alas! if my fears be true, not fleet enough,' she sighed.

Then came on the startled ear the cry of pursuers and the deep braying of hounds, as a sudden gust of wind poured through the forest depths almost with the force of a hurricane.

"'O, Alcanta,' cried the maiden, shivering with fear, 'those are the blood hounds of my father. O, sir knight, they pursue thee, and will tear thee to pieces. It is I who impede thy progress, O leave me, dear knight! It is thy blood they seek.'

"'Never, Hildegard!' exclaimed the knight. 'Sooner now would I give up life itself than thee.'

"'If you love me, Alcanta, leave me here, and make good your escape.'

"'Because I love thee so well, I shall not do so, gentle one.'

"Still nearer came the tumult and the braying of the hounds, and for a moment even the forms of the pursuers opened upon their sight, but were soon lost again by the windings of the forest road. And now in front of the fugitives there appeared a broad river, rushing swiftly on its way to join the waters of the Rhine. The knight paused—the witch hazel grew thickly about him, and breaking off the lesser boughs and stems, he strewed it across the path, and doubling on his course, turned back for miles, until he came to a narrow part of the river where he crossed.

"'I know,' said he, 'the brood of those yelping hounds. The witch hazel will damp their zeal. They lose all power of scent after crossing it, at least for a while, and they will thus be puzzled to follow us.'

"'Fair Hildegard,' said he, 'this eve shalt thou be mine before the holy priest!'

"But now the worn-out steed began to flag in his onward course, and at last stopped, reeling with fatigue. Afar off was heard the howling of Count Rolfe's blood hounds, whose powers of scent had been foiled by the power of the witch hazel.

"Again the knight urged on his tottering steed, and again the animal leaped madly forward, and trees and rocks and mountains of strange aspect flew past them like a vision. Then the astonished and wonder-stricken pair found themselves borne through a living rock which towered far up towards the heavens. Now through cavernous depths, dark as the mantle of night, on, on they were borne now by some strange, invisible power, until at last they emerged into a fertile country, more gloriously beautiful than aught which they had ever beheld. A purple cloud surrounded them for an instant, and when it was again quickly dispersed, they found themselves reclining in the sweet prisonment of each other's arms upon a soft grassy bank, where sprang wild flowers all about them of gloriously varied hues, and whose odor, more rich than that of Araby the blest, brought soft incense of delight to their impressible souls.

"How strange to them seemed all that they now beheld.

"The coal-black steed had vanished from their sight, and Hildegard and her lover knight knew that they were in the realms of fairy land, for they truly felt that splendor such as now met their eyes, was not to be found on mortal earth.

"Noble palms arose on every hand, bowing their graceful, tufted heads, from out of which came forth soft murmurs of winged love, while rarest birds warbled in the air, and plumed their gaudy feathers on the brink of tiny lakes, and in the measureless distance which bounded the gazer's eye, were peaks of sapphire tinged with gold or ruby light reflected from skies more warm and glowing than poet's tongue could tell. What a paradise for love! What a realm for Cupid!

"'O, is this not glorious?' whispered the timid maiden.

"'So it be shared with you, it is a foretaste of paradise.'

"And thus together they reclined in sweet and innocent happiness of heart, entranced with delight, gazing into the matchless fields of light, or better still, into the dearer and more lovely depths of each other's eyes.

"Suddenly Hildegard started and pressed still nearer to the side of the knight.

"'What ails thee, dearest?' he asked, softly parting the hair from her forehead.

"'Dost thou not hear?' replied the maiden, with a fearful tremor.

"'I hear nothing, sweet one; thy fears have made thee weak.'

"'Nay, dear Alcanta—would that my fears were groundless. Behold!'

"As she spoke, a dark vapor flashed across the skies, and a burst of distant thunder rolled upon the ear, while in its swelling volume came again the foul chorus of blood hounds opening on their prey. Hildegard now shrieked with frantic terror, and threw her white arms round her lover as though she might thus protect him from harm. Thus he held her tenderly to his heart, while her gentle bosom throbbed against his own.

"'They come, they come, Alcanta—they will destroy thee.'

"'Dear Hildegard,' he exclaimed, 'fear not for me.'

"'Alas! there is a heavy weight upon my soul, Alcanta. I feel that we must part.'

"'Say not so, dear one. I will not part from thee while life remains.'

"But, lo! harsh voices came on their ears, they looked up and found themselves at the mercy of their foes, who, with the wrathful Count Rolfe and his fiery eyed hounds, encircled them round. As he stood there before them, the countenance of the ruthless chieftain flashed like a burning brand.

"'Ha! thou thrice foolish Knight of Alcanta,' said the Count Rolfe, scornfully, 'didst thou think that thou alone possessedst the key to fairy land?'

"Then signing to a grim attendant who stood by his side, the man let fly an arrow from a steel cross-bow. The weapon sped like lightning and entered—not the breast of Alcanta, at which it was aimed—but the fair bosom of the gentle Hildegard, who, observing the foul intent, had sprung impulsively forward to shield the knight from harm; and thus fatally wounded, the maiden sank into the arms of the horror stricken knight.

"'O, Alcanta, forgive me!—I had forgotten the ring. Do thou—'

"Thus saying she swooned in the arms of the knight, who was so overwhelmed with sorrow that he heeded not the stern Count Rolfe, who passionately called upon the dying girl, and madly sought to stay the crimson life tide.

"'Hildegard, Hildegard, my daughter, I have slain thee!'

"The sweet girl unclosed her eyes and turned them on the half distracted count.

"'Father, weep not, I freely forgive thee—only promise that thou wilt ever be kind to *him!* And now, dear Alcanta, how happy am I that I die to save thee. One kiss before I leave thee in death.'

"'Hildegard, my poor, lost Hildegard,' groaned the father, in despair.

"'What are the charmed words, dearest one,' whispered Alcanta, 'tell me,' and stooping down he bade her whisper them.

"In the next moment he had repeated them, and taking the ring desired that he might die with Hildegard, and pressing his lips fervently to hers, they breathed their last together, clasped in each other's arms. The haughty Count Rolfe came home an altered man, and afterwards joined the crusades, and threw away his life in desperate battle on the sacred fields of Palestine, among the knights of the cross."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE ESCAPE FROM PRISON.

"I was in this terrible situation when the basket stopt."—ORIENTAL TALES.

"Fore heaven, a true Rhine legend, and well told," said Karl Blasius, as his jailor ended his story.

But day after day brought no change to the prisoner, and he saw no hopes either of escape or of being released from the miserable life that he now endured by the penalty of the law.—His only thoughts seemed now to be of her, the fair Lady Gustine, who was the star that might have guided him, under different circumstances, from the crowd of evil influences that had bound him from his youth.

Brooding over his hopeless love, and perhaps not insensible to the promptings of conscience, he grew so gloomy and melancholy that he no longer heeded the visits of the jailor, and, indeed, when he was addressed, often seemed to forget to answer the interrogatory.

Observing this moody and harmless state, which seemed of late to be ever upon him, his keeper at last removed a portion of the heavy chains that weighed him down to the floor of the cell, and thus permitted him to walk back and forth its entire length, and he could even by managing to climb a little, reach the only aperture through which light and air was admitted to his prison room, a small window strongly secured with iron bars. On the support afforded by the indenture that served for the window, he would sit for hours together, and watch, through the gratings, the passing of the crafts that navigated the river, far, far below the cliff on which the castle was built.

Thus occupied, he seemed at last to be once more brought back to a realizing sense of his situation, and a desire once more to enjoy the liberty which he had so long been deprived of. He finally resolved, if only for his amusement, to saw away the bars that confined his window, so that he could remove them and replace them at will, though in proposing to do this, he could hardly be said even to entertain the probability of its aiding in his escape; the thing did not seem possible even with the best of aids and instruments for the purpose, none of which he possessed. The river was a hundred feet below him, at the base of the rock on which the castle was built, and there was not an inch of room or ground that he could see, which might serve as a foothold between his cell and the river's bed. But still it would amuse him to try the experiment upon the bars, and so he worked with a broken link of chain that he found in his cell, and by conducting his operations at the right time, he was unsuspected by his keeper. A large portion

of the clear moonlight nights was thus occupied, because at that time he was less liable to interruption, and finally by dint of an immense amount of labor, he sawed away two of the cross bars. A third cost him more labor than the other two, being new and well tempered, but with indomitable perseverance he still worked on until even that at last yielded to his efforts, and he was then enabled to take them all out and replace them again at will in a moment of time.

Since the bars could now be removed, he was enabled to thrust his head out of the window, which he was careful to do only at such times as he was most sure of not being observed, and thus he could scan the entire outside of his prison, or that portion fronting the river. He found that this side had been deemed sufficiently guarded by its natural situation, and therefore no sentinel was posted in a position to overlook it. Having noted this important fact, he carefully scanned the face of the rock, and his keen eye detected, at some thirty-five or forty feet below his window, a small, narrow crevice in the rock large enough for a foothold, and in a direct line below his cell.—He considered this discovery all-important, and thought upon it for many days, until at last he conceived the idea of making a rope by which he might descend thus far, and then again by means of the same rope and one of the iron bars placed in the crevice of the rock, to lower himself down to the bed of the river below.—He had of late, through the jailor's kindness, been allowed a rough, coarse bed stuffed with tow to lie upon, and upon this tow he set himself to work most industriously, to form himself a strong cord or rope.

Days, weeks, and even months passed on in the unvarying course of time, and still the robber chief remained in his cell, apparently forgotten by the world without his prison walls. But not a moment of this time was lost by him; he was constantly and secretly engaged upon the construction of his rope, with which he confidently hoped to cheat the law, and make good his escape. It grew in his hands but slowly, yet it did increase in length each day, though ever so little, for it was braided and twisted with no little skill and strength. The robber knew very well that his life might depend upon its power to safely sustain his weight, and that the least flaw or weak spot in its entire construction, might cost him his life, and thus prompted, he could hardly be too particular. At last his rope was completed, eked out and strengthed by strips taken from the under binding of his bedtick. He had just carefully surveyed his work and fairly concluded that it was completed, so far as the construction of the rope was concerned, one day, when he heard the jailor approaching his cell at an unusual hour, and he had hardly time to secrete his rope before the turnkey entered, evidently with some news to communicate.

"Well, prisoner," said he, "you and I will probably part ere long."

"Indeed?"

"Yes."

"And how soon?"

"Within a very few days, I should judge," replied the jailor.

"How so?" asked Karl, while he secretly hoped it might be true, though perhaps not in the way the jailor expected.

"Why, you see, the grand tribunal have at last called for your trial, and they tell me to see you prepared to appear before them."

"They have taken their own time for the trial," replied the robber.

"It is true they have been more than usually forgetful in your case."

"Still I am obliged to them," said the robber, half smiling, "since it has given me a longer period to live."

"Why, yes, that's true, for every one knows you are sure to be condemned, and when that's the case, why every hour of such delay is just so much clear gain to the prisoner, according to my reckoning. But you are to appear before the judges now, and therefore if you have any little matters that you wish to arrange before you die, there is no time for further delay."

"When did you say the trial is to take place?" asked the robber, with a coolness that surprised the jailor.

"It will be commenced to-morrow, I suppose, as you are ordered to be then brought before them."

"So soon?" said the robber, thoughtfully; "well, well, perhaps it is as well."

"I think that every man, let his crime be what it may, should be told when he is about to be cast out of this world, and therefore I

didn't hesitate to tell you that you are sure to be condemned, and must be prepared for it."

"I expect to be condemned," replied Karl Blasius, almost indifferently.

"And to lose your head within a week," added the turnkey.

"That I supposed would naturally follow the condemnation."

"If the court do not object, I will procure you a priest before the last day."

"Thank you, my good man," said the robber, a little ironically.

"By-the-way," continued the turnkey, "you must have much to confess that lays heavily on your soul; you whose life has been spent arms aga inst the laws and your fellow-men, and whose profession has been that of a robber."

"Do you think so?" said Karl Blasius, coolly, half musing to himself. "I could, it is true, confess many sins of my own, and many too of other people's, of those high in life, high in office, and honored by the people."

"You don't mean to say," continued the jailor, somewhat eagerly, "that you can implicate such people as you name with your own crimes? If so, such a disclosure might possibly lead to your pardon, as an evidence for the state."

"Not in the light that you mean," said the robber. "I could prove them guilty of worse things than a wayside robbery, where a rich man's purse alone is lightened. They deal in different traffic, and steal away the rights of the poor."

"It is not for me to discuss this matter," replied the jailor, whose sympathies, as he belonged to the latter class, were half with the robber. "But remember to-morrow, at the mid-day hour, when I shall come for thee."

The robber smiled contemptuously as the turnkey closed and locked the door behind him, and being satisfied that he should not again be disturbed before the morrow, he commenced openly to prosecute his design relative to his escape. He saw that there was no longer time for delay, and that if he would succeed at all, the attempt must be made that very night, as to-morrow's sun might light him to the block. His time had come for action, and he was prepared.

The rope which he had constructed was seventy feet in length, for he had reasoned well that it was better it should be too long than too short, as in the latter event he would be placed in a terrible situation. The rope or cord was now uncoiled from the inside of his bed, and arranged beneath his cell window for immediate use, and a few other brief preliminary arrangements were also made. As night came on, he was enabled to make a calculation relative to the moon, which showed him that it would leave that side of the prison walls in shadow before midnight, and still afford him sufficient light to consummate his purpose.

To one end of the rope he now attached one of the loose bars, and lowered it from his window, to try the precise distance to the crevice in the ledge, and though he could not apparently quite reach the spot, yet he calculated that his length of body would make up the slight difference when added to the rope, and thus enable him to reach it in safety. This distance, of course, was measured hurriedly, and with only one half length of the rope, it being all that he could be able to use in his ascent, as it must be doubled about one of the remaining bars of the window, that he might be enabled to draw it after him when he had once reached the crevice, inasmuch as from that point he would take a fresh start to reach the river's bed far below, and this must be done with the same rope.

He had just unloosed more of his rope, the better to sound the exact distance from his window to the ledge, when he was suddenly interrupted by the approach of footsteps.—This was most unfortunate and unexpected to him; his rope and one of the bars of the window were on the outside, and he had only time to replace the other two bars and put matters to rights on the cell floor, when the door opened and a couple of judges and a clerk, with other attendants, entered. It required all his self-possession to prevent him from exposing himself, and many were the fears that crossed his mind, lest the missing bar should be noticed. After certain ceremonies, Karl was informed that the necessary formula of a trial would be performed in his cell, and as there could be no possible doubt with regard to his guilt, it would be of the briefest character; that this plan had been adopted partly to avoid unnecessary publicity,

and partly to prevent the excitement that would necessarily attend the trial of so noted a criminal. This having been duly signified to him, Karl Blasius was then formally arraigned before the court, and asked what he had to say for himself.

"As to what point?" asked the prisoner, standing with a calm, unconcerned air before them.

"Your guilt, or innocence."

"I am guilty of what you charge me with."

"You acknowledge it then?"

"Freely."

"Are you aware, prisoner, that this concession leads to the loss of your life?" asked one of the judges, in surprise.

"Perfectly."

"This will save much time and trouble, at any rate," said another.

"I frankly acknowledge that I am guilty, gentlemen," said Karl Blasius, "and as expedition seems to be quite an object with you, this plea on my part, I conceive, settles the whole business, and I presume there is no further occasion for ceremony."

After a moment's consultation among themselves, they seemed to have settled the affair to their entire satisfaction, and in a few moments, the chief judge, turning to the prisoner, said:

"It is enough; you are found guilty, and are sentenced to be beheaded this day week, at sun rise."

"This day week, at sun rise," repeated the clerk, entering the sentence upon the records.

"Prisoner, we commend you to God," said the judges, as they withdrew from the cell.

Again was the robber left alone to consummate his plans of escape. Congratulating himself on the fact that he had not been detected, notwithstanding the missing bar from the window, he once more turned his attention to the object which had so long engaged him. Having at last completed his arrangements, at about midnight he prepared to put his plan into operation. He passed his rope of tow, ticking and other materials, around one of the permanent bars within the window, and with one of the loose bars attached to the two ends, lowered them down to the extent of the rope, and then, after examining himself, the rope, and taking all the precautions that suggested themselves to his mind, he cautiously hung himself out upon the rope by his hand, and commenced slowly to descend!

His peculiar manner of life had often accustomed him to situations of imminent peril, and he had looked death in the face unblanched an hundred times, but he had been poorly fed in prison; he had been shut out from the air of heaven, to breathe the dampness of a dungeon; his limbs had been weighed down a large portion of the time by heavy irons, and his physical powers had thus been weakened. He was not so strong as of yore, and therefore it is not to be wondered at that his heart should beat so quickly, and that his breath should come and go so rapidly, while he was suspended in this truly perilous situation. He scarcely dared to look below him, lest he should become dizzy and fall.

There was, of course, no chance for footing of any kind; indeed soon after leaving the window, he passed the foundation of the castle walls, and after that the rock receded slightly, so that he hung clear from it altogether, and descended by the strength of his arms alone, without even his feet to guide him, in his downward course. It is a most fearful sensation that of a descent in the dark, and more especially with but uncertain aim, and the chance of instant destruction ever before you. But the robber had summoned all his courage, and still he descended steadily, watching for the foothold that he had so carefully noted from above. Though he feels much weaker than when he left the window, yet hope still nerves his arm, and he holds fast to the rope.

Now he pauses, and holds his way for a single moment. Was that an alarm that he heard above him, or merely the challenge of the sentinels, as they relieved the midnight guard? Yes, that must be it, and still downward he goes slowly and carefully.

Now he finds, by the motion of the rope, that he must be fast approaching its end, and again he looks eagerly for the crevice, but he cannot discover it, until at length he has reached the very extent of the rope, and the spot that to his eye had seemed so near from above, now proves to be still *far below him!* What was to be done? To go back over the rope, was a feat that none but the most expert performer of legerdemain could have done, and yet with the awful prospect of destruction before him, the robber attempted it.

THE MISTAKE OF A LIFE-TIME.

CHAPTER XXIII.—[CONTINUED.]

He could not however raise himself even one hand above the other. His natural strength would not here suffice for the performance of the feat, as we have said, he was very much weakened by hardship.

What an age he lived, in every moment he hung there, upon the side of the naked rock!

His mind, with that strange vividness that it assumes in moments of danger, seemed to comprehend with the utmost minuteness every detail of the entire course of his eventful life. He thought of the terrible fate that must instantly be his, if he should let go his hold, yet he knew full well that he could not long remain thus. Then his active mind even went through with a series of speculations as to what the jailor and the judges would think had become of him, the surprise that would suffuse their countenances, when they found the rope and the iron bars; and then he wondered whether he would die before he reached the water, by dashing his brains out against the rocks, or whether he should become insensible from suffocation in descending so quickly.

"O, God!" groaned he, with the agony of pain that thrilled through his arms as he hung thus reflecting.

Then he speculated, during this lightning-like operation of his thoughts, as to whether a minute account of his attempt to escape would ever reach the ears of the lady Gustine, and what she would say and think of him when she heard of his tragical death; and soon a shade of envy found place, as he compared his own situation with regard to the lady, with that of Robert Stanley.

All this flood of thoughts, and their elaborate threads and divergings, were the impressions of little more than an instant!

His wrists seemed to become numb and senseless, or rather he could experience only a prickling sensation in them. One by one it seemed to him that the cords and sinews snapped and gave way, until his left hand unloosed its hold, and he hung by the fingers of his right hand only, which seemed to retain their grasp more by a spasmodic effort than from any power of the will. He had now no control over them, he even thought that he could not let go if he wished to do so!

Once more he groaned audibly and called upon his Maker!

Karl Blasius felt that his hour had at last come indeed; that the end of his earthly career, with all his sins unshrived, was upon him. He tried to utter a brief prayer, but his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth; he tried to utter a cry of pain, for anything would

have been a relief to him, but he had no longer the power of utterance left him.

At last his brain began to reel, and he lost the command of his reasoning faculties. It was a happy moment for him, for all consciousness was instantly gone, and he burst forth into an involuntary, idiotic laugh!

As that hoarse, deep laugh rang out upon the night air, the sinews of his right hand unloosed their tension, and the robber fell headlong through the air. Down, down he went, all unconscious, but with the speed almost of lightning itself, until without striking the rock at all, he fell into the swift running water, and disappeared at once beneath its surface. For a moment they closed over him, but with the rising bubbles of air, his body came once more to the surface. But as he remained inactive and unconscious, again he disappeared, swept by the current down stream to some distance below the base of the rock, upon whose crowning height stood the castle that had so long been his prison.

The sharp chill of the water, and the second immersion beneath its surface, seemed to revive the robber to a degree of partial consciousness, and fortunate was it for him that he had fainted when he let go his hold upon the rope, for had he commenced that rapid descent with full consciousness, the immediate effect must have been strangulation. As it was, he now seemed most miraculously to breathe again; and after looking in half consciousness about him for a moment, made the natural efforts of a person who had once been taught to swim, to sustain himself upon the surface, and even struck out with his limbs, though very feebly, yet with sufficient strength to keep him afloat.

So weak was the body, that even these efforts were every other moment retarded, nor renewed until he found himself sinking again, when it would seem to rouse him to a moment's fresh exertion. But though the robber's bodily strength was so nearly exhausted, yet, strange to say, his mental faculties seemed to have recovered again from the shock they had received, and his brain, with a strange pertinacity, was again busy in its almost miraculous comprehensiveness, once more rushing with the speed of light, over the broad world of imagination and thought. At one mental flash, as it were, he canvassed the fearful scene and trial that he had but just passed through, and even then, as he lay half immersed in the river, with present danger staring him in the face, he shuddered as he recalled his last moments of consciousness while he hung suspended upon the rope by a single hand.

He fully realized the complete weakness of his body, and reasoned as to whether it was best to guide himself to the shore, or whether to float on still further. In the first instance he would gain rest and strength at once, but run a fearful risk of being discovered and retaken before he would be able to make any very strenuous effort to escape from the neighborhood; whereas every moment that passed over him now, served to place him further and further from the hated vacuity of his late place of confinement. Had it not been for the swiftness of the current which gives any body floating upon its surface additional buoyancy, he could hardly have been able to sustain himself by so slight an exertion of strength; but this was greatly in his favor, and as he thus gasped and feebly struck out with his hands, he was sweeping swiftly and steadily on towards the bosom of the German Ocean.

CHAPTER XXIV.

BILL THE BOLD.

The contrast of the hardened and mature,
The calm brow brooding o'er the project dark,
With the clean, loving heart, and spirit pure
Of youth—I love—yet, hating, love to mark!—H. Fletcher.

The reader must come with us now to the tap-room of St. Giles, where we first introduced him to the prominent characters of our story. It is about a month *prior* to the night in which the meleé occurred, when Sir Robert Brompton and Walter Manning rescued their young protegeé from the vile den of thieves and assassins. The appearance of the room and its usual belongings, are the same as we have before described. A motley group are gathered about one of the side tables, whereon are placed glasses and decanters, either filled or partially so, with the miserable liquor which such a place might be supposed to afford, while the apartment is filled with clouds of smoke and the dense fumes of tobacco.

Mother Giles, as the frequenters of this vile rendezvous had nick-named the woman who acted the hostess here, was in her usual place behind the bar. On some convivial occasion, it was declared that she was the presiding goddess of the district, and ever after she was known by the euphonious title of Mother Giles. There she was behind the rough counter, with her blackened pipe in her mouth, and her cunning, watchful eye, so gray and small, taking in at a glance the entire company, though ostensibly she was most quietly awaiting her customers' wishes. The scene, if minutely described, would not vary much from that of a subsequent night, with which the reader is already familiar, save that one of the present company seemed to be a new comer, and over his arrival the rest were drinking and making merry with song and jest.

Some ten or a dozen individuals sat at the largest table that the room afforded, embracing in their number as hard and villanous a looking set of characters as could well be found in the same number of persons; such a hideous array of countenances, any one of which would have graced a frontispiece for the Newgate Calender! But he who seemed to be the guest of the occasion, deserves more than a passing notice from us in this place. He was a man of the ordinary height, rather thick set, and of some thirty-five or forty years of age. He must have been handsome once, for there was still a high commanding forehead, a fine expressive eye, spite of the ravages of intemperance and of physical neglect, and there was a curling of the lip and a half-contemptuous expression often upon his face, that seemed to show that he scorned the grovelling spirits about him, and yet he was convivial and most sociable with every one.

His companions were supplying him freely with the contents of the bottle, and its effects were already somewhat apparent in the glibness of his tongue, and an animation and life that were very evidently forced and unnatural.

"Here's a health to Mother Giles," said one of the company, challenging the rest.

"Mother Giles," echoed a dozen voices, while they tossed off their drink.

"Mother Giles," said the guest, emptying his glass of the contents.

"Come, on with your story, comrade," said one who sat near him.

"Yes, on with the story," chimed in a half-dozen voices, eagerly.

"Ay, ay, let me see, where was I last?" he asked, musing.

"In the Caribbean Sea with Montbars and Red Rupert," said one.

"Ah! true. Well, they were brave men, both of them, comrades, though Rupert, who was Montbars' lieutenant, soon outstripped his leader, and sailed the finest craft that ever floated in the Spanish Indies.

"Well, I shipped with him and a bloody time we had of it, for Red Rupert was half an Indian by blood, and the fellow thought no more of taking the lives of half a dozen Spaniards, than I should of drinking as many glasses of wine. His father was a Spanish governor somewhere on the Isthmus, and had made love to his mother, a Darien princess, whom he afterwards deserted, but the woman brought up her son after the real Indian fashion, to hate and revenge, and a bitter enemy he proved to the Spaniards, when he did grow up; he killed for revenge, but the rest of us fought for gold and booty. It wasn't very often that he would attack any other vessel but the Spaniards, but their galleons once in sight, he never let them escape him. It's rather queer, messmates, for after all, he was in love with a Spanish girl all the while, and I believe he give up to go and marry her, and live quietly on shore together."

"Sich is love," gulped out one of the half-drunken company, with a silly leer.

"Red Rupert was a generous and noble chap, and we all loved him, and when we parted, we left the clipper craft, the Darien, with our pockets lined with gold, and our hearts full of regret at giving up such profitable service, under such a brave captain. A party of us, tired of this exposed and dangerous life, shipped from St. Domingo for Havre, and from thence I went up to Paris at once, where I soon lost myself, as you may be assured, in the vortex of fun, rascality and business, of the French capital.

"Well, comrade, how came you to leave there?" asked one of the party, knocking the ashes from his pipe, while the whole party prepared to fill their glasses for another dram.

"You can easily guess, if you have a mind to," replied the new comer, with a sarcastic smile upon his features, as he took up a farthing candle, and drew the blaze into his pipe to light the tobacco.

"Probably induced by a desire to travel," suggested one, humorously.

"Or you came over to look after a large fortune that had been left you by a deceased aunt," suggested another.

"A dead aunt! Gammon!" said another, too much intoxicated to take the idea as it was intended.

"You are right," replied the new comer, without noticing the last speaker, "I came over to look for a fortune, that's it."

"Give us some hot water here, Mother Giles, to make the liquor taste a little stronger, it's had enough cold put into it already, eh, old skinflint?" This came from one who had not before spoken.

"Ay, some hot water," said two or three, "give us some hot water."

"In a moment, gentlemen, in a moment," replied the woman, "but as to the strength of the liquor, let me tell you that it's very strange you have not found out that it is weak, before. I say that it is the best."

"Shut up, old crone, we can't have any preaching here," said one, who seemed to command some respect among his fellows; "give us the water, that's all we want of you."

Thus appealed to, the matron of the establishment gave the necessary orders for the article, through a side door, without leaving her position, and soon after, while the party were indulging in a low, bacchanalian song, the water was brought in by Edith, and placed before them in a steaming pitcher. He who had been telling his story as the guest of the party, turned round at the same moment to help himself to a portion of the water to add to his

glass of gin, when his eyes fell upon the girl. The glass he held fell instantly to the earth, and the liquor was spilled upon the persons of his companions, while amazement seemed wholly to possess him. Half rising in his seat, he seemed struck as though he had beheld a spirit; he gazed earnestly and trembled with excitement, yet he did not utter one syllable in explanation of his strange conduct. Edith, wondering at the manner in which he regarded her, after a moment's pause, returned to the back room, presuming the man to have become mad with liquor.

His companions hardly knew what to make of his strange conduct.

"Bill, what in the name of reason has started you so?" asked the person sitting nearest to him. "Eh, my boy, does the sight of a petticoat always affect you in that queer fashion?"

"Who is that girl?" he asked with a long drawn breath, as though he had not dared to breathe before, and still keeping his eyes bent upon the door at which Edith had disappeared.

"Who is she?" replied one of the revellers close by his side, while he turned an intelligent look at the others. "Why that is Edith Giles, Mother Giles' *youngest!*"

"She was so very, very like, that it brought the old feeling over me again, most strangely," said the new comer, sadly, and half musing to himself, as he sat down once more to the table with a heavy sigh.

"O, you've been in love, old chap, you didn't tell us of that," said one of the party opposite to him.

"Come, come," said half a dozen at once, "give us the love story."

"Excuse me," said the new companion, "on this point you must excuse me."

"No excuse, no excuse, let us have the love story," said the merry party, all of whom were more or less overcome by the spirit which they had drunk, and which the hot water was fast sending into their heads.

There was a few moments' pause after this boisterous call, during which time the new comer seemed to be gathering his thoughts, and recalling the records of memory from dates long since passed away.

"There are moments, comrades," he said, with a stern and manly expression on his face, "in the lives of us all, abandoned and wretched as we are, which should be held sacred, relating to circumstances which are recurred to only in our lonely moments, when we find time to commune with our own hearts. You understand me. I cannot speak upon the subject to which you refer."

As he said this, his head sank upon his breast, and he seemed for some moments completely lost in the memories of the past, until the jeer of a neighboring companion aroused him, and raising his eyes and finding himself the object of universal observation and remark, he aroused himself, and called loudly and with forced spirits upon Mother Giles for a fresh bottle of gin.

Leaving his companions for a moment, the new comer addressed a few words to the woman in an undertone, the matter of which evidently related to the girl. But it was very evident from his manner, that the information elicited from her was of no satisfactory character, for he came back to his seat at the table still more dejected than before, and thus moody and unsociable, he threw himself down again among his companions. But the party had no idea of permitting their guest thus to be absorbed in melancholy on his own private affairs. They were convened for his sake, and determined to enjoy him.

"Why, look ye, Bill," said one of the party, "what sort of a cud are you chewing?"

"Has the girl bewitched ye?" asked another, close by his side.

"We shall have to walk him out and show him some of our London girls," said another.

"Gentlemen, spare me," said their guest, arousing from his reverie.

"Drink then," said his nearest neighbor, challenging him in a glass.

"Certainly, let us all drink, gentlemen," he added, suiting the action to the word.

Thus thoroughly aroused once more by the jeers of his companions, he resorted again and again to the bottle, until after frequent libations, and deep draughts of the vile compound, the vacant eye and inarticulate utterance betrayed the state of intoxication to be quite complete with most of the party. And finally, amid half formed jokes and unfinished stories, one by one, they dropped off their seats in a state of insensibility, until the last one was lost in oblivion, and lay with the rest.

It was now long past midnight, and save the

heavy breathing of the revellers, all was silent.

Then it was that the character of the woman who had remained thus patiently at her post, behind the bar, fully displayed itself. Coming out from her professional box, she cautiously surveyed the drunken group to make sure that all were soundly asleep, and then gathered the glasses and decanters carefully together, and put each in its appropriate place, then extinguishing all but a single lamp, she proceeded with a quietness and dexterity that betrayed her long practice, to examine the pockets of her customers, who were now neither in a state to realize this liberty, nor resist the perpetrator of it. They were not of a class likely to have much money about their persons. In most of their pockets she found nothing, some afforded her a few shillings and others only a few pennies, but all were eagerly appropriated by the old woman. When she came to the stranger, he who had been the guest of the party that night, she evinced more than ordinary curiosity, and on emptying his pocket, she found a sovereign. How her little trembling gray eyes glistened at the sight of the gold, how her hands trembled as she thrust it into her pocket, starting as she did so at some slight sound and at a slight movement of the sleeper himself, who seemed to be aware of some disturbance to his sottish slumber. But he did not awake, and the woman moved on, not permitting even the meanest of her guests to escape her pilfering search.

This villany being at last consummated, the woman deliberately counted over her spoils upon the counter, and then tied the money up in a calico bag and replaced it in her pocket, after which she retired into the back part of the dilapidated building, and after soundly upbraiding Edith, whom she found asleep in a chair, she bade her go to bed, in a harsh, unfeeling tone.

"Yes, ma'am," replied the child, submissively, as she prepared to obey this direction.

"And look here, girl," said the woman.

"Yes, ma'am."

"When people look at you in the bar-room, don't you stand gazin' at 'em back again, but you just come in here where you belong. Do you understand that?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Now make haste and go to bed, or you wont be good for anything in the morning."

Go to bed indeed! You should have seen the process this woman denominated "going to bed." Edith opened a sort of closet or ash hole on one side of the cheerless fire-place, and scraping out a few handsful of straw, gathered them in a small heap in one corner of the room, and placing an old, tattered garment—that must once have been a man's overcoat—upon the straw, wound herself up in it, and getting as nearly as possible to the wall, fell at once into a sleep so quiet and motionless that you could have envied her in your heart, her forgetfulness, and the sweet innocence that could sleep so soundly on such a bed.

The woman returned, after she had passed through this back room twice to satisfy herself that she had secured everything under lock and key in her bar room, and the last time came and held the lamp close to Edith's face, seeming half vexed that the child had so quickly gone to sleep. There was a large cat that came over from the opposite side of the fire-place, after the woman had gone out for the last time, and her steps told that she had really gone to her chamber, and nestling close to Edith's side, she rubbed her cold nose against the sleeper's hand to attract her attention. There was no lamp burning, and the dying embers upon the hearth gave but a sickly light through the room. The animal half awoke the lone child, who aroused sufficiently to throw her arms about the dumb creature, which expressed its delight by purring soberly, and thus both were soon asleep together.

Such were some of the scenes of Edith's life, and such the lot she shared previous to the eventful night which is described in the opening chapter of this story, when Sir Robert Brompton rescued and adopted her.

As days passed on, the new comer, who was known among his comrades as Bill the Bold, though the appellation was not always added by his comrades, became a constant visiter and patron of Mother Giles and the tap-room, and though he patronized the bar liberally, and always paid for what he called for, yet he was never again found in the beastly condition which completed his first night's carousal there. The fact was, on the night referred to, he had become much excited, some

inward devil spurred him forward, and drove him to seek forgetfulness in the fiery stimulus, and he had departed from his usual custom in relation to drink.

He seemed to be much engrossed in Edith, not that he said much to her or of her, to any one else, but yet he watched her constantly whenever she was present, and on such occasions, his companions found it was not to their advantage to disturb the train of thoughts that seemed to possess his brain. Once or twice he gave Edith some article of comfortable clothing that she obviously needed, but he made her no other gifts, and the child, though she came to know him as the boldest of all the villains who made the tap room their headquarters, yet rather counted him as her friend, for he had shown her some tokens of real kindness, a rarity to her in the lone and forlorn situation that she filled at this den of wickedness.

It was very evident that he whom they called Bill, had discovered in the features of Edith a most striking resemblance to some loved object, or some individual that had been connected with some strange vicissitude of his former life, or at least this was the conclusion that the frequenters of the place had long since arrived at. He did not affect to love the child, but there seemed to be something that drew him towards her, much like the operation which naturalists describe as occurring between a serpent and a dove, when the latter is drawn towards the former by the operation of a charm. Yet Edith affected him not, any further than in thankfulness for the favors she had received at his hands.

There was one unfortunate result of this kindness on the part of Bill the Bold to Edith, for it seemed in some way to excite the ire of Mother Giles who could not bear to see the child treated kindly, or the object of the least consideration. But Bill himself had discovered this, and one day told the woman if he ever knew of her ill treating Edith, he would just as soon blow her brains out as he would drink a glass of her liquor, and the woman knowing his character, obeyed him in good earnest.

One evening a frequenter of the tap-room, excited perhaps by bad liquor, offered her some slight insult on her entering the room to serve some of the party, and although this person was a large, stout desperado, and a bully withal, he lay flat upon his back in the next instant, by a blow from him known as Bill the Bold, who scornfully said:

"You must be a brave man to insult a child like that. You are slightly punished this time for your conduct, but attempt it again, even by a look, and as true as there is a God in heaven, I will take your life on the instant. Ay, you need not frown, I never was more in earnest I assure you."

"Who are you that come here to champion Mother Giles' chickens?" said the other, rising from his humble posture, and looking as though he would like to fight if he dared to do so with such a spirit.

"A man!" replied the outcast, as he bent his stern, resolute eye upon the other.

"Sit down," whispered one of his friends, "he's dangerous if you cross him."

Thus warned, the pitiless villain stalked away, and said no more, but the example was not without its good effect upon the low bred frequenters of the tap-room, at least so far as Edith's comfort and interest was concerned, inasmuch as no one dared to offer her insult again, even in jest, for it was whispered about that Bill the Bold, who always kept his word, had threatened to take the life of the first man that attempted to insult her. Edith's growing beauty and interesting manner really needed some protector, though it should come from such a questionable source.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE BURGLAR'S STORY.

Oh! there never was a life like the robber's—so
Jolly, and bold, and free;
And it's end?—why a cheer from the crowd below,
And a leap from a leafless tree! PAUL CLIFFORD.

Not unfrequently when a party of the desperadoes who frequented the tap-room, were gathered there and in a convivial mood, some one was called upon for a story, and the events thus related were often of the most curious and novel character. To be sure they were characteristic, and told in the rough, vulgar language of the class from which they emanated, but yet the eventful scenes through which they were constantly passing, supplied them with a boundless field for stories and plots.

On one of these sociable occasions when a knot, including Bill the Bold, were gathered about a table in the tap-room, one of the comrades called Hardhead, from some applicability of the title, was called upon for a story.

"Vel, comrades, I doesn't object to tell vun of 'em as is short."

"Give us something professional," said Bill, placing his feet upon the table, and puffing a cigar.

"Stick to the truth now, Hardhead," said another, settling himself to listen.

"I allers does," said the individual addressed, appealing to the rest.

"To be sure you does, Hardhead, now fire away, my hearty."

"Ah," said Hardhead, "times isn't what they used to was. These moral reform and march of himprovement covies has done up many a branch of the perfeshun, as used to be honorable and exciting, and guv rise to a race of men as reflected credit on themselves and the country. Vhare, I vould respectfully enquire, is the High Tobyman (Highwayman) of other times? Vere is the Dick Turpins and the Claud du Wals and sich like—real gemmen, brave as lions, and liberal as lords, as used to sport their bits of blood on the turf and in the Park, and flash their flimsies and poney their dust in the hells of London, and go to masquerades at Wauxhall, and go in and vin the 'arts of duchesses? I asks, and heco hanswers, vhere? They is registered among the bein's as vere; creeters of the past. They is gone—some on 'em sleeps in nameless graves, others transformed into 'natomies, is hanging up in Surgeon's 'All. Them vas the coves. My 'art bleeds, and a sea green and yaller melancholy, as the poet sings, comes over me venever I thinks on 'em, it does."

"Mother Giles, another pint of this 'ere purl, if you please."

Having refreshed his inner man by a deep draught of the fiery liquid, which was brought to him by Edith, Hardhead cleared his throat by several vigorous coughs and hems, and then went on with his story.

"Them covies as I was speakin' of, led short lives, but merry ones. In the long run

society, vich is ever the henemy of the brave and noble, hoperating through the mis-called ministers of justice, the tipstaves, queer cuffins (Magistrates), cut 'em short in the career of their glory. But vot of it, comrades? A man can't die but vonce, and it matters but little to the philosopher vhether his life be cut short by an 'alter or a bullet, *it* doesn't. 'Sides the high tobyman vas always sure of the sympathy of the masses, not of the big vigs, the bishops, lords and gemmen, but the people, and 'specially the ladies—God bless 'em—'ere's their good health. The close of sich a man's life vas a moral triumph, *it* vos.

"Ven the queer cuffin, vith his big vig, and hempty 'ead put on his black cap to pass sentence, the high tobyman stood up and faced the music like a true mettled 'oss. Ven he hentered the cart to go to Tyburn vith Jack Ketch, he vas dressed in his best, and vore a nosegay in his bosom and carried a bokay in his hand—The vimmen, God bless 'em, and 'ere's their 'ealth ag'in—shed pearly tear drops, dearer to him than drops of purl (gin). He mounted the three legged 'oss, foaled of a hacorn, vith a step as never trembled. He dropped the fatal 'andkerchief, and then vas dropped 'imself,dying game like a true blue son of a gun."

"'Them is reminiscences as we all knows about, Hardhead," said a little stubbed piece of humanity beside of the burglar. "But where's your story? that's what we want to hear, my covey."

"And you needn't talk about the three legged 'oss, if you please," suggested another, "for I knew a fellow once—"

"Hold up," said a third party, "we don't want to hear you now, let Hardhead tell his story."

"Ay, let Hardhead tell his story," chimed in half a dozen all at the same time.

"Vel, gemmen, all that 'ere is now past and gone, there aint many real spirited chaps among us, cause vy, the breed's runnin' out. The business of the road is done up altogether, and ve find ourselves reduced to *faking clies* and *readers* (stealing handkerchiefs and pocket-books) and *cracking kens* (housebreaking), a business as is beneath such as us, but vich ve must follow, or else ve shall starve. But speaking of cracking kens, brings me to the pint of my discourse, as I intend to tell you, and that is the story of French Bill, as all the covies used to call my 'ero."

"O, it's comin' at last, is it? Vell, drive ahead and give us the story, comrades," said the short man.

"Some years ago," resumed Hardhead, "a young man as vas properly introduced and vouched for, bringin' certificates of the very vust moral character, and the most desperate designs, joined the select circle of gemmen to vich I 'ad the 'onor to belong. There was summut wery strikin' in 'is personal happearance, vich is heverything in the perfeshun. He vas helegantly formed and summut above the middle 'ith. He vas apparently slight and weak as a *kinchin mort* (young girl) but happearances is halmost halways deceitful, for that slight and feminine frame vas made up of bone like steel, and muscles like a mixture of India rubber, whalebone and catgut. My hies, now I remember, vot a cove French Bill vas ven he vas up.

"Von blow of his light harm and bunch of fives vould lay a fellar hout as cold as Cæsar. I've seen a good many 'ansom cracks men in my day, but French Bill beat 'em hall, hout and hout, *he* did.

"His features were reg'lar, his eyes blue as London milk, his complexion remarkable for it's dilixy, and his 'air black as Ingy ink, or Day & Martin. His 'ands vas delicate as a duchesses, and his feet wery small halso. He simply guv his name as Villiam, and no questions vas asked, for he vas varranted a good 'un by 'sponsible men, and vot he vas, or vare he came from vas neither here nor there, so long as he behaved 'imself like a gemman, and vas true to his pals. But then he vas so wery polite—so like a Monseer in his manners, 'sides his bein' able to patter the lingo like a reg'lar built frog-eater, that after a vhile he got the name as I have referred to, and the covies all called him French Bill, *they* did.

"In the good hold times I vas speakin' about, ven I begun this 'ere story, French Bill vould have been a high tobyman, but he seed how things vas, and know'd there vas no kind of huse in trying *that* on, and so like a true philosopher, he did the best as could be done under the circumstances, and took to crakin' kens like a real Trojan. He vas werry expert in the huse of gimmies and false keys, he took to such things sort of nat'ral like. 'Sides

that, he could snuff a candle, or centre the bull's eye at ten paces, and could play a sword like a life guardsman, right and left, cut and thrust, *he* could.

"Venever henny desperate *lay* (job) vas purposed, French Bill vas alvays the first vun to wolunteer. The whole town vas struck aghast vith the daring of the hexploits he achieved, and the police tried in vain, vith all their cunnin' and hexperience, to discover the hauthor of these remarkable houtrages. Money flowed into the common stock like a river, and though he vas the cause of nearly hall the success, he vas wery modest, and vas contented vith a moderate share.

"Sometimes he used to disappear for veeks together, and then ve had rumors that he vas figurin' avay as a foreign Count at Bath, or Brighton, or Arrowgate, or some other fashionable vatering-place, and ve felt proud of 'avin' von of hus a takin' his proper stashun in society, and representing the perfeshun in so distinguished a manner. Ven he came back from vun of these excursions he generally brought a heap of *swag* (booty) with him, showing that he united business and pleasure in a manner perfectly agreeable and profitable. Sometimes it vas a gold mounted cane or hopera-glass, sometimes a diamond ring, and sometimes a bracelet or other harticle of jewelry. Many of them were love-gifts from the fair and fashionable, and them Bill never turned into the common stock, he halways claimed these as his own, and employed them on purposes of his own, vich I vill explain to you gemman presently," said Hardhead, turning to Mother Giles.

"Another pot of purl, if you please, Mother, from the best bottle."

"I 'allers sends you the best, Hardhead, and you knows it," was the answer.

"Well, push it along, thank ye, Edith," said Hardhead, as the girl passed the pot of gin. "You are a growin' hearty, and will be a lady one of these 'ere days. Thank ye, girl."

"Drink your purl, and go on with the story," said the little short burglar.

"Shorts, don't be impatient, my cove, I'll accommodate you in a twinklin'," said Hardhead, drawing a long breath after the draught of liquor that he had just swallowed, and preparing to go on with his story.

"There vas an old covey as lived in Wapping, at the time I'm telling you of, who vas connected vith us by ties of common interest. He kept a small ship-chandler shop, hostensibly for sellin' old junk, and bits of iron and rope, but in reality, he vas a receiver of stolen goods—as the laws calls it—an agent of ours, and a necessary one too, for he disposed of all such articles as ve didn't know vhat to do vith, and vich ve picked up in the line of our perfeshun. He vas industrious and persewering, and had got a pretty snug lot of *blunt* together by his business, and he know'd a thing or two, I *tell* you.

"Now this old covey had an only child—a daughter. My hies! vhat a beauty she vas! Her hies vas like stars in brightness—only they vas dark as night—but scarce darker than her raving hair. She had a form like a queen's. Her valk—my hies—she valked like a hopera dancer, and stepped as light as a hinfant burglar on a egg-stealing hexpedition. The roses and lilies in Covent Gardin' Market vas nothin' at all compared to her complexion. She vas a reg'lar hout and houter, and no mistake. French Bill seed her, and the first time he sot his peepers on her, vy, he vas struck up all of a 'eap, as von may say. I recollects vell his first impressions ven he saw the gal, for you see, I vas vith him.

"'Bill,' says I, for I was lookin' at him all the time, 'Bill, you're a gone sucker. Her hies has gone right through you like a key-hole saw through a panel, they have.'

"'Hardhead,' said he, 'you are mistaken. It's no such thing.'

"'Bill,' says I, 'have I been takin' too much purl? tell me that.'

"'Not's I knows of, Hardhead,' said he larfin' at me all the time.

"'Then,' said I, 'there's no mistake about it, and you are reg'larly smit.'

"'Oh! nonsense,' said Bill.

"'Vell,' said I, 've shall see. But look sharp that the gal doesn't get you into trouble. Beware of the blowens, many a man has had his neck stretched for 'em. Remember vot the song says:

"My nuttiest blowen vun fine day,
To the beaks did her fancy man betray."'

"'Never fear,' said he, 'I'm not in love yet, and if I was, Jenny is as true as steel."'

"But he vas in love—though he didn't

know it then—and Miss Jenny got all the pretty rings, and bracelets and necklaces and purses, as vas given to Bill, or stolen by him ven he vent among the big-bugs at the vatering places and sich like. He used to go a sarahnading her, and cumed all sorts of romantics vith the girl. There vasn't nothing in the vay, for the old man vas agreeable, 'cos he knew French Bill vith all his hexpertness vas vurth his veight in gold. Vel, at last it vos agreed that he should marry her, for she vos von of that genteel sort as goes in for the parson and the ring. Her prospex and his'n vos all bright and glowin', and many a pint of purl ve used to drink to the 'ealth and speedy union of French Bill and the Wapping Belle."

"Was they married at last?" asked the little fellow they called Shorts.

"Keep still a bit," said another, "can't ye let a cove tell his story?"

"Vel, boys," resumed Hardhead, "vun day a great lay vas proposed to us. This vas no less than cracking the ken of a rich old hunks as had just moved from Yorkshire to the neighborhood of London, vhere he had purchased a waluable willa on the Thames. The chap as vas on the lookout and reported the game to us, said the lockers vas full of plate, and that the old man vas known to have a vast amount of gold vich he vas keeping by him to make a certain purchase. Ve chose von dark night for the hexpedition, and hafter gettin' everything ready, ve took a boat on the Thames and rowed silently to the willa. It vas a dark, ugly sort of a night, no moon, no stars wisible, and now and then a big drop of rain cumed down about us, damp and dreary.

"Me and French Bill and Stammering Jake made up the party; 'twasn't best to have too many, and three could vurk as vell as a dozen and better too. We landed and hid our boat in a quiet place, and it had got to be about midnight then. Passing through a dark lane, ve come to a garden gate in a brick vall, and here ve heard the deep growl of a bull dog, but ve never vent unprepared for all emergencies, and Bill tossed a piece of poisoned beef steak over the wall. Ve didn't hear no more growlin' out of *that* animal. Dumb dogs, like dead men, tell no tales, and Bill said as much ven after listening, he vas convinced he vas dead. It didn't take us long to pick the garden gate, and ve soon found ourselves on the other side, snug and undiscovered, and there vas the dog as dead as a herrin'.

"Ve approached the house quietly—nobody vas stirrin', all vas as dark and silent as if it had been an old church standing in a grave yard. Ve soon vorked our vay into the house, and up to the china closet, vare ve opened our dark lanterns, and vhile French Bill and Stammering Jake vas fillin' their bags vith silver spoons and cups, I vent up stairs to see vat swag there vas aloft. I vanted to get hold of some of the shiners the old feller had hid avay somevhere, and so I left them to look after the other stuff. I opened a door into a chamber, and there vas the old gemman and his wife asleep in bed. On the other side of the room stood a secretary invitingly open. I crossed the floor on tip-toe and broke hopen vun of the draws. My hies! it vas full of gold, himages of our gracious sovereign in precious metal. I valked into the yellow boys, I tell you. But some unlucky noise woke up the old Trojan, and the fust thing I knowd, he lighted a lamp. I turned round just as he vos jumping hout of bed. He vas a vhite-haired old codger, and looked as brave as a lion.

"'Von vord,' said I, springin' to him, with my knife in my hand, 'von vord, and I stops your squeaking forever, with my whittler.'

"'Dog!' said he—upon my word he made use of that identical ungentlemanly phrase—'die like a hound as you are.'

"And he snatched a pistol from the table and pulled the trigger. The cap only exploded, and I had him by the throat.

"But the noise, slight as it was—and it was very slight, for it didn't wake up his wife though she must 'ave been an uncommon good sleeper—struck the quick ear of French Bill. Almost any one else would 'ave cut, but he comed up vile the old covey was struggling with me, a tryin' to get at another pistol on the table."

Here the burglar stopped and called for another drink of purl, showing by his manner that he had reached a part of his narrative that caused anything but pleasing memories to arise in his thoughts. However he drank again, and went on:

"Of course you'll suppose when French Bill came into the room he rapped the old cove over the head. He did no such thing. He

gave *me—me*—a blow behind the ear, as sent me reelin' across the room, and wrenched the knife out of my hand. The old man started forward to see who was his deliverer, but instead of pourin' out his thanks, he bust out with:

"'O, God! is it you Frederick, and do I find you the associate of villains?'

"French Bill, or Frederick, or whoever he was, stood there just as white and ghostly as a corpse, and he trembled just like a leaf; he had to hold on to a chair to keep up.

"'Ah,' said the old man, in a hagony of tears, 'vy did you spare my life, to give me up to shame and sorrow? The knife of that ruffian (you see covies he meant me) would have been more merciful.'

"Then French Bill, mean Frederick, trembled more and more, till at last he fell down on his knees and clasped his 'ands and cried like a babby, as he said in a broken voice:

"'Father, father, O, forgive me for my poor mother's sake.'

"I didn't stop to see what followed, for somehow or other the servants had got the alarm, and were movin', so I and Stammering Jake cut with as much of the swag as we could grab. Ve got back to St. Giles's some ow or other, but without French Bill. He didn't come back with us that night—and he never did."

"You never see French Bill after that?" asked the impatient Shorts.

"I didn't say I never see him; I said he never came back again."

"Don't be botherin', Shorts," said one or two of the party, to the little burglar.

"Vell, vot do you think, my boys?" resumed Hardhead. "That old feller was Sir Frederick Armington, a baronet, and French Bill was his only son. He vas a vild youth, and the old man had cast him off and disowned him. But blood is stronger than vater, and after all as had passed, the father took him back again, and that 'ere young man vas so foolish and degraded that he accepted the old man's hoffers, and so lost to shame, that from bein' a cracksman, he sunk to a gemman's son. However, natur is unaccountable. To see a young man of his natural abilities run to vaste in that fashun vos too bad, *it* vos.

"But Sir Frederick Armington had enemies, and one of 'em, havin' obtained information from a crackman who peached, denounced his son to the authorities, and he was at vunce arrested. The most powerful hinfluences was used with the government for his pardon, and at last he obtained it, but only on vun condition—that he would turn *snitch* on his pals—king's evidence, and denounce to the authorities all his old associates. Ve got vind of this and dodged, von or two himigrated to the United States, others vent to the continent. Bill spared me, and the beaks never laid a finger on me.

"But that vas nuffin, and I vas bound to do justice on the traitor, and I swore to take his life."

"Vell, did you do it?" asked Shorts, again interrupting Hardhead.

"No."

"You didn't?"

"No—I didn't."

"Vot pervented you?"

"Vot pervented me? Just this 'ere. But I'm mighty dry," and Hardhead took another draught of the "purl," and after a moment's pause, resumed his story as follows:

"Jenny, Frederick's blowen, the gal at Wapping as he'd swore to marry, she who had given herself entirely up to him, got vind of my design, and by her powers of perswashun, prevailed upon me to hold my hand for a while. She said as how she'd a good reason for it, and palavered me till I consented. Then the poor hinnocent gal tried her arts to while him back to her harms again, never doubting for a moment that he loved her still, as before, and they did meet after that more than vonce, and he allers swore eternal love to the ship chandler's daughter.

"But she soon found hout that he was just as false to her as he had been to hus, and that he was at that very time ven he comed and promised her everything, engaged to marry a French nobleman's daughter. This put an end to all her love; she didn't palaver any more about that, but looked as though her principal vituals vas vormvood and gaul. If you have seen a Bengal tigress, you'll have some idea how that blowen looked ven she vas satisfied that his love was false to her.

"'Vell, Jenny,' said I, von day, for I often vent over there in a friendly vay, and sometimes on business too, 'do you vant me to

hold my hand any longer? aint you convinced of his treachery now.'

"'Yes, Hardhead,' said she, 'but don't harm him yet, for my sake.'

"'If you say so,' said I, 'vhy I'll hold off for a year, but I shall keep my oath at last.'

"'Only a little while longer, Hardhead,' said the poor girl, 'for my sake.'

"'But you are growin' pale, Jenny,' said I, 'you musn't be unhappy for such as he.'

"'O, no, Hardhead, not I; don't think I'm unhappy for his sake.'

"But I know'd all the while that she was miserable about his desertin' her, and this made me want to kill him all the more, for I half loved Jenny myself, though she didn't care a pin for me.

"Shortly arter this, there was a masquerade ball on the Christmas holidays at one of the theatres, and I vent there myself for the purpose of pickin' up a job in a perfeshunal vay. Vell, Jenny, the belle of Wapping, vas there too, dressed as a gipsey, and she fastened onto a young man in a pink domino, vich vas nobody else but our old French Bill, as was now called Frederick Armington. He didn't know her, but she recognized him by his voice, his manner, and his walk.

"She vas a werry facinating creature, werry genteel and haccomplished, and she perfectly bewildered him. At the close of the evening, he asked permission to accompany her home. She consented, replying in the same feigned voice as she had assumed for the whole evenin', and he was delighted, for he seemed to have become infatuated with the unknown beauty. Vell, they got into a car'age and vare driven fast through a part of the town, until they arrived at last before a house in St. Giles', in a dark street, vare no police troubles themselves to penetrate, and vare the houses vare very old.

"Frederick, or French Bill, just vich you please, vas too much hoccupied with his new conquest to observe particularly vare they had come to, and she took good care to keep his mind engaged upon other matters, and as the car'age stopped and he handed her hout, she took him by the hand, as hif to show him the way, and led him up a narrow and dark staircase, and then into a room that was as dark as Hegypt—you couldn't see your hand before you.

"'Can't we have a light, my dear?' said Frederick Armington.

"'Yes, vait a moment," said she, 'while I get a lamp.'

"'I'm all impatient to see that pretty face of yours,' said he.

"Vell, let go of my hand for a moment, vill you?' said she.

"'If you will be very quick I will. Do you promise me?'

"But slipping away she made him no answer, and in a moment afterwards, he felt a cold ring of steel pressed against his forehead, and was startled by a voice that he recognized only too late, and vich thrilled through every fibre of his guilty frame, as it solemnly pronounced these words in his very ear:

"'Die, double traitor, false to your friends, and to your love!'

"The explosion of a pistol instantly followed these vords, and Frederick Armington *alias* French Bill, fell dead at the very feet of his forsaken blowen, who would have been to him a faithful mistress.

"Thus fell a scoundrel as turned snitch on his pals, and may hevery traitor meet with the fate of French Bill."

As he ended his story thus, the sentiment was echoed by the whole company, who drank Hardhead's health in a glass of purl.

CHAPTER XXVI.

EDITH AND CLARA.

Virtue is like precious odors, most fragrant when they are incensed or crushed; for prosperity doth best discover vice, but adversity doth best discover virtue.—Bacon.

The reader will remember the night when the two burglars and the little boy effected their entrance into Sir Robert Brompton's house, and of their escaping after a fruitless search for booty, with the person of Edith, Sir Robert's adopted child, We left them just as they were passing out of the basement window in front of the house, while the watch or night police were entering by the back door. We will not pause to describe the consternation that spread itself through Sir Robert's household, but will follow the burglars and their burthen.

Edith, as we have already said, was quite insensible, offering no resistance to the purposes of the villains, who were thus tearing her from the bosom of a happy and contented home. In this state the burglars bore her along in their arms by the shaded side of the streets, until at last reaching a dark alley they entered it, and having threaded its entire length, they seemed to pass the rest of the distance, which carried them to their rendezvous, by following the course of the darkest lanes and alleys and by streets that the metropolis would boast of, and though they did not seek that portion of the town universally known as St. Giles, yet after a half hour or more, they had stopped at last in a small suburban district that was certainly of no better character than that notorious locality.

Entering a large old wooden building that must once have been occupied for some extensive manufacturing purpose, but which was now quite tottering and dilapidated, presenting a half ruinous appearance, they deposited their living burthen upon the floor of the room which they entered, where a lamp was burning evidently in anticipation of their arrival, and for their use. Edith had so far revived during the latter part of the route as to sob faintly now and then, but not sufficiently to realize the situation in which she was placed. But now as she was laid down gently upon the floor, she gradually came more fully to herself, and her physical strength to revive, and in this condition rising upon her arms, she looked wildly about her for a moment, and then said:

"Is this a dream, a horrible dream, or am I awake? Where am I?"

The two burglars whispered to each other.

"What does this mean, where am I?" asked Edith, half amazed.

Neither of the burglars seemed disposed to answer the question, but the elder of the two, whom the reader ere this has recognized as Bill the Bold, went to a side door, bidding his companion, who was Hardhead, to keep a bright look out on the girl for a moment, and rapped, and half opening it, asked of the inmate:

"Are you awake, Clara?"

"Yes," replied a gentle and very soft voice from within the room.

"Come out here, I want you," said the burglar, who then closed the door, and waited for the person he had summoned, to make her appearance. But he was very impatient, and in a moment more, he opened the door again, and said softly:

"How long are you going to keep me waiting, girl? come, make haste."

"I am coming in one moment," replied the same pleasant voice.

In about a minute after this second call, a young girl entered the room, and upon beholding Edith she seemed struck with surprise. She must have been of very nearly the same age as Edith, and she was of much the same figure and appearance, and indeed there did seem to be not a slight degree of resemblance between them, in complexion, features and expression. Clara, as the burglar had called her, came at once to Edith's side, looking anxiously towards the robbers as if to know what she was to do. Then pausing for a moment, she seemed to gaze with ardent admiration upon the lovely face and form before her, and taking Edith's hand within her own, she pressed it kindly, while she bent over her, and addressed some kind words to her in a whisper.

"Take her with you and take care of her," said the burglar, coldly.

"Is she to stay long here?" asked Clara innocently enough.

"That concerns you not; do as you are bid, and be content."

"Come, Hardhead," continued the other, "you and I will go now, and leave these girls together."

"Good night, Clara," said Hardhead, nodding familiarly to Clara.

"Good night," replied the girl, absently, as she retired to the room for a lamp, while the two men withdrew from the apartment and locked the door after them.

Clara soon returned with a lamp, and taking Edith by the hand, she led her, with a kind assurance that no one would harm her, into the other room, which was evidently the one appropriated for her own occupancy. Having got in here and closed the door, the lamp was placed upon a table, and the young girls sat down opposite to each other to gaze for some time in wonder; Clara at the exquisite loveliness and rich dress of her companion, and Edith to look from the poorly clad but handsome girl opposite, to the strange apartment and the prominent signs and tokens of the place, which recalled most vividly to her mind the position of circumstances with regard to herself a little more than a year previous, in the tap room of Mother Giles!

What a throng of contending emotions rushed across her brain as she sat there thus contemplating the scene before her.

The place was a sort of store room used for the keeping of lumber, or any refuse article that it was desirable to put aside for the time being, and the dingy, dirty look that the articles presented, showed that it was long since they had been disturbed. In the corner of the room there was a miserable apology for a bed which was spread upon the bare floor, and which was evidently the sleeping place of the young girl already referred to. Edith surveyed the apartment calmly, and seemed to understand the situation of matters at once, and being far too weak and exhausted from her late adventures either to ask questions or to answer them, at last lay down with Clara at her kind suggestion, and in spite of her fears and grief, after awhile fell into a troubled sleep which lasted until late in the morning.

Of course Edith found immediately on rising from her hard couch that she was a prisoner; indeed the burglar who had brought her thither told her so at the outset, and that she must not as she valued her life, attempt to escape from the place, and he so inspired her also with dread and fear, that had no other means been taken to prevent her escape from the house, it is doubtful if Edith, scarcely more than a child in years and experience, would have dared to make the attempt, notwithstanding she felt most acutely every bearing of her singular position, and realized how anxious and unhappy Sir Robert, Walter, and the good Mrs. Marlow would be. And then the last twelvemonth of improvement had been so thorough, and she had been so susceptible to the best influences, that were so liberally exerted in her behalf, that she realized in the keenest manner the contrast between the comfort and refinement that she had just left at Sir Robert's house, and the vulgar associations that sur-

rounded her on all sides in this filthy place. In her speculations upon these matters, once the fear crossed her mind that possibly when the family at Sir Robert's should awake in the morning and find the house robbed and herself gone, they might be led to suspect her of being voluntarily absent, and that she was one of those who had robbed them. The bare probability of such a thing seemed to render her most miserable; all other casualties growing out of her present situation for the moment dwindled into insignificance when compared with the chance that these dearly loved ones might suspect her of being unworthy the generous solicitude she had received at their hands, and of thus repaying the warm affection that each and all in that dear house had accorded to her. But this thought did not trouble her long, it was dismissed as being unworthy of a single pang of fear. "They must have known my heart too well," she said to herself.

A few days served to accustom Edith to her unhappy situation, or at least comparatively so, and also to cause her to feel some interest in her young companion in misery. Clara, as they called her, was, like Edith, not more than fifteen years of age, yet the mode of life that she had evidently followed, had perhaps more fully developed her person and mind, as it regarded her bearing and manner. For many years, as Edith afterwards learned, she had been thrown entirely on her own resources, for the care of herself, and without so much as a single adviser of her own sex to whom she might go or consult upon even the most trifling subjects. Her casual associates had been rude and boisterous men, with now and then an exception in favor of some one who possessed more heart and kindness than the rest. Her home had ever been in some den like this, where burglars and thieves made their headquarters. She was very handsome, yet not so much so as her new companion, her beauty being of rather a different character. She was playful, quick at repartee, and apparently happy in spite of her situation, for she had never known any other life than that she now led, nor did she possess that nice sense of delicacy that would render her, as it did Edith, unhappy because a rude word was spoken in her hearing or herself made the butt of a coarse or a low jest.

Of course this was occasioned by the want of education and association with the refined of her own sex, in no small degree, and yet in Edith's case, which in many respects seemed to bear a strong resemblance to that of Clara there was a certain delicacy, and an inward prompting, that had kept her pure from the contaminating influences that had surrounded her in the tap shop of St. Giles. She had come from that den as pure and unstained at heart, as though she had never seen the dingy houses of London, or breathed its murky atmosphere, but had gambolled away her youth on sloping hill-sides, and by the margin of babbling brooks. It was nature, not art, in Edith. But let Clara's situation have been what it may, her character and natural disposition was so free, generous, truthful and warm-hearted, that Edith had not been in the house with her a single week, before she loved her like a sister, and frankly told her so. Only too much delighted to have a companion of any sort, Clara returned this affection with interest. She seemed to be under considerable fear of Lancewood, as Bill was known in this place, at the head of which he seemed to be. Clara said that he had been known to kill so many people who had opposed him, that she was afraid he would one day take her life, and throw her body into the Thames.

"Does he ever threaten you, Clara, that you fear him so much?"

"No, but before you came, he used to sit and look at me strangely, and now he does just the same to you, though I don't think that he means to harm you, I am sure I don't. But don't you think his eyes are very bad ones?"

"They don't look very pleasant or agreeable to me, you may depend."

"I never saw worse ones."

"How long have you been here, Clara?" asked Edith.

"About a year, I should think, though I keep no count of time."

"Where did you come from then?"

"A place farther in the city."

"Like this? I mean, frequented by this sort of people?"

"Yes."

"Have you any father living?"

"No."

"No mother?"

"No, I never had one to know her. A woman whom I used to call aunt, was very good to me, I can remember, until I was six or seven years old, but I was taken away from her by somebody after a while, though how, or why, I canot exactly remember. I believe she died or was murdered, but I have seen so many strange persons since, I have had so many changes, that I cannot remember very well about those times. I do remember that for a while I had no home at all, but used to sleep under a boat at Wapping, and beg in the day time. After that I was in a cellar in St. Giles, and helped to take care of a bar, but they said I was too small, and one day the woman who lives in the rooms with Mrs. Lancewood saw me there, and she said if I would come with her and help her take care of her house here, she would give me a comfortable home. But the first time that Lancewood saw me, he started and gazed at me so queerly that the woman drove me out of the room, and I have had to sleep and stay in these rooms ever since, except helping her a little now and then when he is out."

Edith remembered that he had been similarly moved when he first saw her at Mother Giles's, but said nothing.

"So this is the comfortable home that the woman promised you," said Edith, glancing about the room they were in, and then comparing it in her mind with the sumptuous apartments that she occupied at Sir Robert Brompton's.

"I don't suppose you think it a very good home," said Clara, "but then it is a nice one for me after all. I had to sleep in an open shed most of winter before last, and then O, I was so cold in the frosty nights, that I used to cry; but this room you see is quite close, and then I've got a pretty good bed. Don't you think so, Edith?"

"Perhaps so, Clara."

"No, but don't you *really* think so?" asked her companion, earnestly.

Edith could only smile at her earnestness and simplicity. No word of complaint had escaped her lips since the night on which she had been brought to the miserable abode. Even when the rough and profane woman who seemed to be the wife of Lancewood came to her and took away the nice clothes that she had worn on that fearful night when she was stolen away from her friends, she said not a word, submitting without resistance, but with an aching heart, that was far too sad and broken to utter its complaint. Now she was clothed like Clara, very coarsely, but still their clothes were whole, and it rested with them to keep them clean. Some light duties were required of them by the woman referred to, who seemed to wish to get rid of them; but this she dared not attempt, though she ruled Lancewood apparently in nearly all things else, yet relating to this matter, she did not seem to dare to cross his will or thwart him.

To Clara the story which her new friend told her of her life at the tap-room in St. Giles, her singular rescue from thence, and the manner in which it was done, and the subsequent years which she had passed so happily at Sir Robert Brompton's house, seemed like a fairy tale, and she was never tired of listening to it from Edith's lips. Indeed her new companion was obliged to tell these things to her again and again, and repeat to her over and over again, how the good Mrs. Marlow looked, and what she said, for it seemed to the inexperienced and beautiful girl that such things could hardly be true, they were so wonderfully beyond all experience of her own. But she believed every word, because she knew that Edith would not deceive her, and she kindly sympathized with her young companion at the loss of such friends, and would have cheerfully risked much to have placed her once more safely in the hands of those she had left. But she feared for her very life, should she take any step to further such design as that of Edith's escape.

The reputed wife of Lancewood watched the girls narrowly, and strove, it seemed to them, to render their position as uncomfortable as possible. None but the coarsest food was permitted for their use, and this was often scantily served. Lancewood himself frequently came and smoked his pipe in the room adjoining the store room, and drank his portion of spirit and water, and when he did so, he often summoned them from their sleeping room and engaged them in conversation. To Edith these were terrible moments, for the man at times would stare at her so wildly, and seeming to forget himself, would often mutter such strange, incoherent sentences,

that she would involuntarily draw near to Clara, and almost seek to hide herself behind her companion. Then at times, the woman who kept the house would come in upon them, when a scene was sure to ensue. She would rave in the most violent and unaccountable rage at him for preferring the company, as she said, of the two young girls to her, and Bill the Bold was most untrue to the title his comrades had given him as characteristic of his spirit, for as Lancewood in his own house, he was perfectly submissive to this woman's *tongue*.

Though bold beyond all his comrades when there was actual danger to meet and overcome, yet he could not contend against such fearful odds as an incensed and jealous woman presented.

Sometimes, one or two young men, evidently under the patronage of the woman of the house, came to see Clara and Edith, but although the latter always retired as quickly as possible from their coarse and unmannerly society, yet she was not unfrequently surprised and even grieved to find that Clara did not wholly dislike their company. The truth was, Edith could make no allowance for the want of native delicacy in another that she herself was so fully endowed with, nor did she remember poor Clara's lack of cultivation, and ignorance even of the first principles of religion and Christianity. The society of the vile even, if characterized, as it was on such occasions, to her by *kindness*, was a novelty in which her untutored mind could find no cause for self-crimination. These casual friends were kind and generous to the forlorn girl, and she was but too happy to experience such treatment from any one.

Heaven weighs the deeds of such in a wise balance; if Clara sinned, she did so innocently. If she was imprudent and even guilty in deed, still her heart was true and innocent, for she knew no better!

True, she sometimes listened thoughtfully to the simple reflections of Edith, upon her entertaining the society we have referred to, but neither were much more than children—and how could it be expected that such should successfully repel temptation? or rather how could Edith inspire her handsome and winning companion with the feelings that filled her own gentle breast where the foundation for receiving such goodly advice was entirely wanting? As for Edith herself, she might have lived for many a long year in such a place without contamination. Nay, she would have come out of the fiery ordeal as pure as the asbestos, which is only cleansed by contact with the fiery element.

"Clara, I know you will no longer see those persons, for my sake."

The eyes of the handsome girl would seek the floor, but she spoke not.

"Say, Clara, will you not refuse to meet any of them again?"

"Alas, Edith," she would answer, sadly, "are we not very often without food and articles of actual necessity to keep us warm and comfortable, and are not those persons who bring them to us our friends?"

"O, my dear Clara, we should not prejudice our souls to comfort our bodies," Edith would say, repeating the good, though homely advice that Mrs. Marlow had often given her.

"Do you think so, Edith?" she would ask, thoughtfully.

"Indeed, indeed, I do, Clara, or I would not say so."

"I believe you, Edith."

"And will think of what I say?"

"I will."

Shrewd hints and repeated warnings of this and the like character, were not lost upon a disposition naturally so sweet and gentle as that of the orphan Clara. She did think much upon what Edith said to her, and before a twelvemonth had expired—for time is quickly passing on as our story proceeds—Clara had gradually learned to listen with more and more absorbing interest to the reflections of Edith, and to understand her meaning and object better, and indeed voluntarily to refer to the great and vital principles of virtue which she had so earnestly and frequently repeated to her, and then poor Clara would weep at her own condition and declare that she must have been blind not to have known and realized all these things of her own heart. A change seemed to take place in her whole manner and character, and she was never tired of talking with her companion upon the subject of good principles, and the strength of purpose and resolve that would enable a repentant one to sustain a truly innocent course of behaviour.

What a lovely, but unhappy champion of virtue was Edith there! How successful she was with her fair young companion, and how tenderly they loved each other, sharing all their hardships and deprivations together.

"It seems, dear Edith," Clara would say, "that having been providentially rescued from a position not unlike my own, save that I have been more sadly unfortunate than you were, heaven has chosen this strange means to bring us together, that I may profit by your knowledge and virtue."

"Ah! may the work so feebly begun, Clara, be yet perfectly consummated by your eventually finding that position and care, which your dear kind nature so richly deserves."

"You are too kind and thoughtful of me," the ingenuous girl would say, throwing her arms tenderly about Edith's neck, and imprinting an honest token of affection upon her fair cheek.

Having studied well their situation, and the manner in which they were detained, the two young girls resolved, on the first fitting opportunity, to attempt an escape from the thraldom that bound them. They were so cunningly watched, however, so hedged in by a series of combined circumstances, that it seemed almost impossible for them to make a successful attempt for their liberty. Had not this been the case, Edith would long since have risked everything in the effort to regain her freedom, and in fact she had more than once attempted to do so, but was frustrated by her captor and his emissaries.

Of late, too, Lancewood had been more frequent in his visits to their rooms, and his eyes, which glared upon her always with some secret and undefinable passion, incited by circumstances that she knew not of, seemed to her more terrible than ever, and more and more did she fear him, for she knew not to what fearful end he might thus be detaining her. It was after one of his singular visits in which he was more than usually moved, seemingly by recollections of the past and the promptings of the present, that Edith whispered to Clara when he was gone:

"I can remain here no longer, Clara, and though I may lose my life in the attempt, I am resolved to leave this house at once and forever. Will you not try and go with me?"

"Yes, but where to, Edith?" she asked.

"To good Sir Robert Brompton's, provided we can only get once clear of this fearful neighborhood," shuddering as she recalled the maddened gaze of Lancewood on his last visit.

"But you forget," said Clara, "that although Sir Robert Brompton has been very kind to you, yet he might not thank you for bringing another to feed upon his bounty.—Besides, Edith, I am not so handsome and pleasing as you are and could not win friends as I know you could do anywhere."

"Nay, dear Clara, you need not fear on the subject of welcome. Sir Robert or Mrs. Marlow would befriend any one at my solicitation I know, if, alas! we could only see them."

"Do you think so?" asked the poor girl, with joy beaming from her expressive face.

"Think so, Clara, I know it," replied Edith.

"You have told me so often of the kindness and generosity of Sir Robert Brompton, that it seems to me as though I knew him already, and the good Mrs. Marlow too. She must be almost an angel, and Walter Manning I want to see above all things. Ah! how fine it would be if I could see them, and live there with you, if only as a servant, Edith, to wait on you and Mrs Marlow."

"Let us but get once fairly away from here, Clara, and you shall share all the influence I have with dear, good Sir Robert."

And thus the two girls talked themselves to sleep one night, firmly resolved to make once more a careful and well arranged attempt to escape. We say once more, for though it was the first attempt that Clara had resolved to make, yet Edith had twice failed in a like endeavor, made singly, while Clara, knowing better than her companion the fruitlessness of the attempt, had thought it best not to join her, and the result showed her wise precaution.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE FRENCHMAN'S STORY.

"Ma chere patrie, adieu pour jamais."

The reader will once more come with us to that famed district of the great metropolis, where all sorts of vice and villany congregate, and where misery and crime walk hand in hand.

It is into one of the low drinking rooms that are to be found at nearly every other door in the district known as St. Giles, that we wish again to introduce you. In its general character it does not materially differ from that wherein our story opened, and over which Mother Giles presided, save that it is rather better found in its furniture, and a man presides at the bar, instead of a woman, the latter sex generally performing this service among the lower classes of London. Transient customers were passing in and out of the room constantly; little half-clad children with a few pennies to purchase gin for their diseased and bed-ridden parents; or now and then a wretched looking man or woman came in, and depositing their mite, tossed off the portion that was dealt out to them, and then perhaps shrugged their shoulders with satisfaction at the momentary glow and warmth that the fiery liquid afforded, and once more sinking into wretched listlessness, hobbled away with no other nourishment for their bodies, to dream away another restless night.

In a farther corner of the apartment, there sat some ten men around a table, forming a very peculiar group. Nearly every one evinced some outward token of his habits and calling about him. Some showed ragged looking scars upon their faces; others had cut-throat written there as plainly as though it were spelled in letters of print. They seemed to be engaged in a convivial chat over a bottle of "purl," and were listening to stories and anecdotes from each other. It was getting rather quiet in the room, it being already past eleven o'clock, and at the time we enter with the reader, the party had just drunk the health of an elderly looking rogue at the side of the table, who had just treated the party to a fresh bottle.

"And you say, Mounseer, that France is a great country for a *lay?*" asked a villanous looking chap, addressing a dapper looking little Frenchman, who sat opposite to him.

"Ah! *ma foi!*" replied the chevalier, as those about him had more than once addressed him, "it ees ze ver greate countrey for vat you call ze *lay*—ze plundair—in ze vorld.—Ze *gens d'armes*—vat you call ze *beaks*, ze polich men—ave ze eye open—aha! *c'est vraie*—eet ees troo—but *'cre nom de dieu!* vere is the professeur who ees not proud to risk his life for glory or *argent*—vat you call money—swag."

"Then what, I should like to know, Mounseer," asked our old friend, Hardhead, who sat at the table, "if France is such a bung-up place as you brag on, what made you cut your stick and leave it?"

"Cut my steek! Aha! *Je vous comprends*—I understand you. Ah! *je suis bien malheureux*—I am very miserable. France, *ma chere patrie, adieu pour jamais!* Fare zee vell! Vy I leave him, I vill tell you in two, tree, several vords. For several years, Antoine Perrault and my own self, we lived togedder *a Paris*, like ze nobleman. Ve laughed into de sleeve of our coat at ze *gens d'armes*, ze judge, ze Prefect of Police. Ze peps began to zink ze very *diable*, ze debbil himself, vas in Paris. No lock would keep us out. Every night some new vot you call robbairee, and nobody at all no find no odder bodie, vat vas the robbaire. Sometimes de *concierge*—vat you call portair of an hotel—vas seized by ze police. Aha! dat was very droll, to see anudder man vat had no finger in ze pie, taken to prison all ze same as if he vas von *voleur* robbair. Aha! Antoine and myself we live *en prince—patees a foie gras* and *coted'or tous les jours*—every day some leetle nise zing to eat and drink—every night ze opera, ze *bal masque*, or ze *maison Rouge!*—But, alas! von day ze luck change. Ze *gens d'armes*—vot you call ze beak—came on me, and I vas a prisoner. Ah! *quel horreur*. I vas sent to the *Bagne*—ze gallery at Brest—and condemned by ze solemn Big Vig to hard labor for life. Shentlemens, if you saw my shouldair, you vould see on it T. F.—zat means *Travaux Forces*—forced labor. Aha! zat miserable Bagne at Brest!

"A leetle more vat you call ze *eau de vie*—ze gen—*s'il vous plait*.

"Ah! diable! diable! But I vos luckie," continued the chevalier, "I foun a frien'—I escape. I vas once more free! I take ze road to Paris. On ze vay, I overtake a young man who vas a *nias*—vat you call *green*.—Aha! I say, some fun viz him—perhaps some profit. I find out all about him. He vas a young country gentleman, going to Paris to marry a young girl he had never seen.—He had his passport, a hundred Napoleons, and his wedding clothes. By-and-by ve come to a very dark place in ze road. I struke him von *coup de poing*—vat you call fisticuff—on his head, and drop him down for a dead man. Zen I take his clothes, his passport, his money and his horse, and I go on to Paris. Ver vell, I get my passport *visi*—all right. I am M. Hippolite St. Muar. I find out ze old gentleman and ze young girl. Mademoiselle Lizi had ze beautiful black eye and ze beautiful black air, and ze rose on ze cheek and ze ruby—ah! *c'etait une jeune demoiselle charmante!* She fall right down in love viz me, and she ver impatient for ze wedding day. I no wish to marry ze young ladie, but I vas forced to marry ze young lady for ze fifteen thousand francs that was her dowery—aha! So ze day come, and all the friens of Mademoiselle Lizi vent vith us to *l'eglise*—church. And zere vas butiful music, an flowers, an every zing fine. Ze priest he stand up to join our ands, ven ha! diable! in rush ze *gens d'armes*, ze *maudits* beaks, an ze dead mans, dat vas not dead at all, but only knocked right into ze middle of ze next veek, and come to life two, tree day after.

"Lizi shriek and rush forward. *Voila! c'est au forcat!* he is von escape convict, cries ze beak. Zere vas *un brouhaba informale*—Lizi *tombe evanouie*—she faint—old gentleman tare hees hair—I run avay?—jump thro' de vindow—fly troo de street. Everybody seem to cry *diable! le voila.* Ze leetle small puppy dogs—zey bark an trie to bite me, but I vas too fast for ze *canaille* and ze *chiens*. I reach ze *Faubourg St. Antoine*. Zere I find my *caveau*, my cellar—my *tapis franc*—vare I am safe for leetle vile. But my old frien, Antoine Perrault, he tell me ze *diable* to pay in Paris. Everybody 'ave ze story. Ze government offer ze reward for my head. Zen I was forced to fly. *Adieu, ma patrie.* I disguize myself voi ze false visker. I vare ze moustache. I am von Polish count, and so I get out of ze way of de beak and ze guillotine. As I cross over de vatair, I vas very sea seek and home seek, and ven I see de vite cleef of Dovair, I felt all ze same as if I vas lost. But here I find myself at home. Here de *voleur*, and de *ravageur*, and ze *coupe-gorge*, all ze same as in *La Belle France*, and I exclaim from ze bottom of ze top of my heart, in ze language of my soul: vere ze *cracksman*, ze hightobyman, and ze *bustle* is, zere is my country! And that, Mr. Hardhead, is ze reason vy I cut my steek!"

"You should have stole the pretty girl and brought her away to live with you, Mounseer."

"No, no, I will love, but not marry ze ladies always."

"You needn't marry 'em. Now there's Bill the Bold, he's got two cooped up at his place."

"Two?" asked the elderly man, who had paid for the last bottle.

"Yes, and they look like two sisters, though they never seed each other till about a year since."

"Where did he git 'em?" asked the other, rubbing a large patch which he wore over his eye, as though the spot it covered caused him no little pain.

"O, that's a secret, though I don't know in such select company as this, vhy it can't be told, since I bore a hand in the affair myself. It's all *mum*, you understand, covies."

"O, yes," said they all.

"Vell, you must know, a pretty girl, by the name of Edith Giles—"

"What of her?" said the old rogue with the big patch over his eye, springing to his feet, and approaching the speaker.

"Halloo, vhot's the matter vith this 'ere cove?" cried one of the party.

"You're right, comrades, I didn't mean to interrupt. Well, go on."

"Well, ye see, this girl used to tend on Mother Giles down at the tap-room, where we used to rendezvous, and one night a dozen of fellows came there in force and took her away."

"A dozen?" asked the man with the patch.

"More or less, it matters little how many; at any rate, there were half a dozen heads broken that night, and the girl was carried off. Well, about a year after that, there was a *lay* proposed, and I and Bill was to carry it out with one of the boys, for an opener.—Well, we got into the house, one of the best in town, and after lookin' in vain for the plate, we found in one of the chambers, this girl Edith, all comfortable like a lady. But how she comed there, we never knowed. Well, Bill was sort of smitten with the gal, and to tell the truth, she was mighty handsom', and he determined to bring her away, and so we did, and a heavy job and little profit it was to me, as Bill he took her, and keeps her shut up at his place."

"Where's that?" asked he with the patch.

"Way over at the river side of Moorhead."

"As far out as that?"

"Ay, Bill got tired of St. Giles; he said it was dangerous."

"Look here, Hardhead," said he with the patch. "I want to speak to you."

"With all my 'art. I'm allers open to conwiction."

Saying this the two withdrew to one side alone, where a low conversation was held between them, in which it was very evident that he with the patch was planning a visit to Bill the Bold's house. Hardhead said he had just had a falling out with Bill, and so he wouldn't go no how. "Well, you might show me where it is. I don't care to have you go there if you don't choose," said the other, and as both were going in that direction by-and-by, Hardhead concluded there would be no harm in showing a comrade where Bill lived, though he wouldn't call himself, since Bill had blamed him for something, though he took occasion to say that Bill was away, he believed, for a day or so just now.

A careful observer would have noticed that the man who wore the patch was acting the part of a masquerader, and that there was one other of the company, between whom and himself there were frequent interchanges of intelligence.

The bottle circulated pretty freely, until an hour more had passed, making it twelve o'clock, when Hardhead, being pretty well softened with the gin he had drunk, declared that he must bid them good night, and that as there was no *lay* on hand, he was going home to roost like a quiet and respectable fowl. He with the big patch over his eye, and his companion, of whom we have just spoken, also bade the company good night, after pledging them all in a bumper, and withdrew with Hardhead. The three walked rapidly, but gently forward for some time, scarcely interchanging a word, for Hardhead was half stupified in his brain with liquor, and the other two had seemed all the evening to be playing the part of listeners, rather than talking themselves. At last they came to the northern outskirts of the city, and soon after, Hardhead told them that he took another road, but that if they wanted to see Bill, they would find his house, the big one on the right

hand, just after turning into the next street, and thus they parted in a dark and dreary spot.

Scarcely had the separation fairly taken place, when the appearance and manner of the two who had left the drinking room with Hardhead, were essentially changed. Though the elder of the two still walked lame, yet he no longer stooped. His cap was thrown off his face, and the dirty patch was removed from the eye! His companion underwent a similar metamorphosis, though not quite so decided a one, and had there been any one there who knew them, they might now have easily recognized Sir Robert Brompton and Walter Manning.

"This must be the house, Walter; now mark it well; for to-night is no time for our purpose; and yet I can hardly restrain my impatience, now I find myself once more so near to that dear girl!"

"I could tell the spot a hundred years hence," said Walter, who, though he said nothing of his impatience, yet evinced it most unmistakably even in the tone of his voice as he spoke.

They walked silently about the old building, marking well its position and the locality about it, and did not seem disposed to leave the spot for more than an hour. At last Sir Robert said:

"We may as well make our way back, and sleep upon this. Our plan must be well matured, and put in force if possible either during daylight, or at least in early evening."

"Very well," said Walter, looking back many times as they walked away from the spot.

"Walter, we must not lisp a word of this matter, for you know as yet our information is precarious, though it is impossible that Hardhead could mean any other person than Edith."

"I shall be as silent as the grave, Sir Robert; depend upon it."

"If Mrs. Marlow asks what success we have met with, let the same answer as we have given her heretofore suffice."

"I understand, Sir Robert."

And thus interchanging a few words now and then in this manner, they hurried forward until at last they entered Sir Robert's house. Not to sleep—neither of them could do that—for the search of a year, in quest of a beloved object, was about to come to a successful close, at least so they presumed in the excitement, and the daylight surprised them both calculating in what way they should attempt Edith's release. Sir Robert was exceedingly averse to employing the police, because that at once rendered Edith's whole story public, which he seemed particularly anxious to avoid. But he had a thorough knowledge of the character of Bill the Bold, or Lancewood, from his companions, and once or twice he had met him in disguise. He knew that no ordinary means would suffice, if this man should suspect and oppose him before he could effect an entrance into the house. All these matters were duly considered and talked over by Sir Robert and Walter. The latter urged the propriety, under the circumstances, of employing a small number of police, as the surest mode.

Sir Robert seemed to have urgent reasons for desiring to conduct the affair secretly, and without calling in the aid of the authorities, though Walter insisted that otherwise there were ten chances to one that they might fail, and then if Edith was really there, those who had her in charge would take care to place her beyond the danger of a second attack, and thus they might lose sight of her forever.—"Still, Sir Robert," said Walter, "do as you think best, and you may count upon being backed by one who will stand by you, let what may come of the adventure."

"But, I tell you, Walter, I do not wish to make the affair public. I am particularly desirous to have it otherwise."

"A half dozen police might be well feed, and detailed with a seret warrant, not even knowing what they went there for themselves."

"That's true; egad, it might be managed in some such way as that."

"We should be with them, and could manage our part of the business as we please, and if Edith is there, take her quietly away while the police are preventing any interference on the part of those who belong to the house."

"I think this can be managed, and perhaps better done in this way than in any other. I know the Lieutenant of Police at Holburn, for the eastern division, and I will see this morning what I can do in the matter, and before night we will make the attempt."

"I am all impatience Sir Robert, and shall think of nothing else until Edith is once more safe within these walls," said Walter.

Sir Robert adopted this plan and before evening, had organized a small party of police, who had particular instructions to follow his directions in all things, and being supplied with a secret warrant in due form, signed and sealed, the party rendezvoused at a certain house at a spot near the premises, where they met in accordance with the appointment, and proceeded to demand an entrance upon the premises.

It was just about dark when the police demanded admittance, which after some delay was granted by the woman referred to as Lancewood's companion. Seeing that resistance was of no use, the woman submitted with the best grace she might, and observed the search of the officers in a surly and moody silence, not deigning to answer one of their questions, though she said "if her man was at home, there would be some broken heads amongst them!"

In their eagerness, Sir Robert and Walter searched every nook and corner from garret to kitchen, but they found no sign of Edith. As to the woman, neither threats nor money could elicit aught from her; she was experienced in villany, and knew too much to commit herself in any way, realizing that the surest way not to do this was to remain perfectly silent, as though she were deaf and dumb.

Both Sir Robert and Walter several times passed through the two rooms that we have already referred to, and where Edith and Clara had been so long shut up together, but they found no sign of them, or rather of Edith, for it was she alone that they sought. It seemed as though Sir Robert's heart would sink within his breast at this disappointment. He had felt sure of finding his lost protegèe until now, and Walter, who was also greatly disappointed, could not but pause to pity the look of woe upon Sir Robert's face.

"We seem to have come on a fruitless search this time, sir," said the sergeant of the police to Sir Robert.

"Yes, I fear so," he replied, "and yet I had good reason to believe my suspicions correct."

"Ah, sir, these people are very cunning; they probably expected you, and took care of matters."

"Possibly, that *may* be the case," replied Sir Robert, seeming to gain satisfaction from the idea.

"Well, sir, I suppose you have no further occasion for our services?" said the sergeant.

"No. It will be of no use to remain here any longer," replied Sir Robert.

The man turned to go away with his companions, when Sir Robert recalled him, and placing a handful of sovereigns in his hand, told him to share the sum with his fellows, and name his thanks for their vigilance and promptness.

Sir Robert and Walter turned their steps with heavy hearts towards their home.

Since the fearful night when Edith had been stolen away, it is doubtful if a single day or night had passed in which Sir Robert Brompton and Walter Manning had not been engaged in vain endeavors to unravel the mystery of her loss, and to discover her present place of confinement. They did not for a moment suspect Edith of voluntarily absenting herself. They fully realized that she must be forcibly detained wherever she might be, or else her own inclinations would lead her back once more to the protection of her new home and friends. All manner of ingenious devices were set on foot to solve the mystery, and to obtain the desired information. Persons who might be relied upon were employed from one week's end to another, at a most lavish cost, while Walter and Sir Robert were making personal exertions night and day.—Disguised as we have seen, they frequented the tap-rooms and low resorts of the worst part of the town, to see if chance would not at last throw some light upon the matter in this quarter from whence the scheme must have emanated.

But until the evening which we have just described, they had never been able to obtain the least clue to unravel the mystery, and now, alas! that had failed them, though Sir Robert hoped yet to be able to improve this hint as to Edith's fate to some good end, though at the first step he had been so signally thwarted. But Walter thought he had never seen him so much depressed and borne down, and he made bold to attempt to cheer him.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE SUBTERRANEAN PASSAGE.

You reach a chilling chamber, where you dread
Damps. CRABB'S BROUGH.

IN order to show the reader why Sir Robert was not able to find Edith and her companion, we must return to the house where they had so long been confined, and once more observe them in the fulfilment of the purpose they had formed to escape.

At the rear of the building that the burglar had made his headquarters, there was a narrow yard surrounded by a fence which was not by any means an insurmountable barrier, provided that Clara and Edith had dared to attempt it. But the fact was, Lancewood kept a fierce bull-dog on his premises, and the animal roamed this yard at all hours of the day and night, trained to seize upon any person who entered the yard, no matter for what purpose, and being kept half starved by his owner, he was a most formidable enemy to encounter. The fierce creature would make friends with no one but his master, and though he sometimes received bits of food and remnants from her own scanty meal, from Clara with avidity, yet it was oftener with a surly growl, than a grateful wag of his tail, and he seemed to delight in showing every one the immense teeth that filled his mouth. This being unfortunately the case, aside from any other fear as it regarded detection, the poor girls knew very well that an encounter with the dog might cost them their lives on the spot, should they attempt to escape by the back of the house through the yard.

On the other side of the house were neither windows nor door, and to reach the front yard opening upon the street, they would have to pass through the room occupied by the woman who kept the house, and where Lancewood himself slept. There were two windows in the side room which they had access to, but these were always fastened even in the day-time, so securely that they were unyielding to any ingenuity of effort that they could bring to bear upon them. These windows had at times been looked most wistfully upon, but up to this period had entirely baffled their attempts upon them. Thus situated, the young girls seemed to be as securely imprisoned as though they had been confined in Newgate itself, and the barriers opposed to their escape were as difficult for them to overcome as they would be in that famed place of confinement. The windows to which we have referred, seemed to them to afford the most tangible mode of escape, though to effect this

and overcome the difficulty presented in the strongly barred shutters and heavy bolt fastenings ingeniously contrived, they must possess themselves of better instruments for operating than they could then command.

With this conviction, they sought as quietly as possible among the lumber and old rubbish of the store room where they slept, for some strong piece of hard wood or bit of iron that might serve them as a sort of pry or lever to wrench off the hinges and other fastenings that so effectually secured the windows. This search involved the removal of many a heavy piece of lumber, besides various other articles and rubbish of all sorts, but they worked patiently, confidently expecting to find some such article beneath the heap as would answer their purpose. On the afternoon subsequent to the day upon which they had made up their minds as to an attempt to escape, while they were both engaged in the search among the lumber and rubbish, Clara stooped to pick up a small iron ring that she discovered upon the floor, and found to her surprise that it was apparently fastened to the floor, so that she could not raise it. But at last their united efforts accomplished this, and to their astonishment they raised also a square board of some two feet in width and three in length, that was fastened by hinges, and which seemed to open into the very bowels of the earth. It grated harshly upon its rust-eaten hinges, and seemed to give forth ominous and foreboding sounds to the ears of the startled girls.

The two looked at each other in astonishment for a moment, without speaking.

"Shut it up, Clara," said her companion, at length; "how very damp and chilling the air pours up from below. It may be some horrid pestilential vault, where dead bodies have been secreted!"

"Perhaps not, Edith," said her more courageous friend. "Who knows but that by means of this trap door we may find some passage away from the house that is unguarded, and by which we may yet escape?"

"It is fearful even to look into it," said Edith, surveying the dark cavity with an involuntary shudder, "and how very terrible it would be to go down there, not knowing where it leads, or what it might bring us to at last!"

"I do not fear to go down," said the fair young girl, while her beautiful eyes sparkled with spirit and animation. "What have we to fear, Edith? I will go first, and you shall follow me."

"But we must have a light, or we shall be lost at once in the darkness, and not be able ever to find our way back again, if that should be desirable," said Edith.

"That is true."

"We can easily get a lamp."

"But what time should you think it was now, Edith?"

"It is nearly night—about the time that Lancewood frequently comes in, and looks about the rooms and stares at us so oddly."

"Then we will close this trap door, shall we not, for the present?"

"What for?"

"Why, until he has gone."

"O, no, if we are to go down, let us do so at once. I shall then escape the sight of his fearful eyes which look so strangely and wildly upon me," said Edith, covering her face with her hands, as if to shut out the vision that her own words aroused.

"Well, if you think best, we will go now. You throw this shawl about your head and shoulders," said Clara, offering her a miserable apology for the article named. "I will light the lamp, and be ready in a moment."

"But what will you wear, Clara?"

"I shall not want anything."

"But I will not take this away from you."

"O, never mind me," said the generous girl, "I am hardier than you are."

Edith would not take the proffered garment until another piece of torn cloth that was used upon the bed, was brought to answer the same purpose for Clara. The lamp was found at last, after Clara had succeeded in striking a light by means of a tinder box, and it discovered to them a flight of half dilapidated wooden steps, that were decayed and covered with mould by the operation of the dampness, and slimy vapors that seemed to pour up in almost suffocating density in their very faces. With a particular caution to her companion to tread carefully, lest she should slip and fall upon the damp steps, Clara slowly led the way, descending she knew not whither. But scarcely had they descended a single step before the light was extinguished, the cold current of air setting up from below proving too strong for

its weak flame to withstand. Both returned at once to the room, hardly knowing what to do. A second attempt must of course prove as fatal as before; if they took the lamp into that cold current of air, it must go out.

"What shall we do, Clara?"

"Go without it," suggested Clara.

"That would be impossible."

"Stay, there is that broken lantern in the side room, I'll get that."

"That will be just what we want to shelter the candle from the wind."

Thus reinforced, they commenced once more to descend the damp and slippery steps through the trap door. The darkness was so dense that they could only see a few steps before them; but down, down they went, slowly but without stopping for nearly twenty feet, when Clara paused, remembering that they had left the trap door above them open. She saw in a moment the importance of closing that behind them at all hazards. If Lancewood should happen to come in and find it open, he would instantly comprehend by what means they had escaped, and follow them at once, and perhaps overtake and bring them back again. She told Edith of this, and said that she would go back and close it, while she should remain with the light where she was; and crowding by the trembling form of her less courageous companion upon the narrow steps, she once more ascended to the top of the stairs, and closed the door over her head, even taking the precaution to lay the ring into the groove that was cut out for it, and which would partially hide it; then she returned again to lead the way in that dismal place. Even the courage of the brave little Clara began to yield at the hoarse gusts of damp air that played about their ears, and whistled wild and mournfully through the steps and about them in all directions.

The last step brought them both nearly to their ankles in water, but after pausing for a moment they seemed to gain fresh courage and resolution, determining to explore the place, at all hazards, and satisfy themselves as to whether it could afford them any means of escape, now they had gone so far. As they went on slowly groping their way, they found that the water decreased in depth, and they were soon again on the dry earth, showing that a sinking of the ground about the base of the steps had caused the water to gather there, and it was into this that they had first stepped. After becoming somewhat accustomed to the singular darkness and the effect of the lantern upon it, they discovered that the place which they were in was a sort of narrow vault, having the appearance of being a passage leading to some distant opening evidently undermining the neighboring houses, and perhaps opening presently by another trap door, up into some room of a house equally to be dreaded by them, with that which had so long been their prison, and which they had now left for the first time in a year's space.

"Clara, where is your hand? It is very dark and dreary here."

"It is indeed," replied Clara, drawing close to her friend.

"Perhaps we are going to a worse place than we have left, Clara."

"And perhaps, Edith, we are already half free; think of that."

"Heaven grant that it may prove so," replied Edith.

It grew gloomier and narrower as they went on, until both at last paused, and seriously considered as to whether they should not turn back again rather than go on any further with such an uncertain purpose, but they both were so strongly impressed with the desire for escape, that they resolved to keep on at least for a little longer. The passage was stoned all about them, and even overhead, the upper work being supported by frequent blocks of stone placed at intervals along the way, showing that much labor and cost had been expended to form the passage, which, however important it might once have been, was now evidently forgotten and unimproved. Chilled through by the searching dampness, and a current of keen air that seemed to set directly into their faces with almost malicious force, they increased their steps that they might the quicker settle their fears and doubts, either for good or evil. But Clara, who carried the lamp, unfortunately in her eagerness tripped her foot against some obstacle, and falling herself, also dropped the lantern, which was instantly broken into a thousand pieces, and the candle itself was extinguished. What a fearful situation for the poor fugitives! To return was impossible,

and to go on seemed to them to be equally so. They knew not what to do.

"How unfortunate this is," said Edith; "the light was our only safeguard."

"And I have broken the lantern by my carelessness," said Clara, sadly.

"You could not help it, and are not to blame," said her companion, kindly.

Taking each other by the hand once more, they slowly groped their way forward through the intense darkness, still hoping they might come at last to some place that would afford them light. Until now Clara had seemed to be the most courageous of the two, and had taken the lead, but soon her heart failed her, and she trembled, while with Edith, in proportion as the hopelessness of their situation increased, so her spirits and mental power seemed to rise to meet the contingency. It was now her turn to offer encouraging and consoling words to Clara, and to cheer her still to hope for the best, and so they still moved cautiously forward. At last, however, both became almost completely exhausted by excitement and exertion, and having drawn as near together as possible, Edith proposed that they should kneel down and pray. All was black and dark about them. O, how fearfully *dark* it seemed to the hearts of the poor young girls. Edith had taught Clara to pray, and now upon the damp cold ground they knelt down side by side, in that strange subterranean passage, and lifted up their voices to the God of the oppressed and fatherless, who hears his children, no matter how deeply hidden they may be in stone walls, and whose eye beholdeth them, no matter how far they be beneath the earth's surface. They had remained thus for some time, when Edith lifted her sweet but trembling voice, and prayed for light, O how fervently! They rose from their kneeling posture, for the dampness was chilling them more and more every moment, and again they turned their faces, to struggle on for a little space farther, when, as though their prayer had been heard and miraculously answered at once, as they both looked forward, they uttered an exclamation of joy and surprise to see the faint glimmering of a light in the distance, small, but yet most distinctly visible.

"O, God be praised," ejaculated Edith, as she beheld this ray of hope.

"Our prayer was heard, and answered; I feel now that all will be well."

"I already feel strange, do not you, Clara?" asked her companion.

"Indeed, yes, since there is that light in view, we may hope for the best."

How their hearts leaped for joy! They wept and embraced each other for joy, prompted by the excess of delight that now possessed them. With their eyes fixed upon the little faint ray of hope, they struggled on patiently, though already so nearly overcome with fear and exertion. Step by step they gained on the light that shone in the distance, until the passage was narrowed so much at a certain point, that they were compelled to stop as they went on, and finally to almost creep in their forward movement, until they finally emerged from the passage at a secluded and sheltered spot upon the waters of the river Thames. The singular excavation which they had traversed was doubtless one of those celebrated smuggling caves that abounded upon the river's bank in the sixteenth century. Though delighted beyond measure at the partial success that now dawned upon them, still the two girls fully realized that they were very far from being out of immediate danger, for they were in one of the very worst districts of all London, among the river robbers, and low-lived boatmen.

Besides this, neither knew which route to take in order to reach that section of the city which Edith was so desirous to find, and where Sir Robert Brompton's hospitable house was located, and in their fear they were afraid to ask any one they saw, lest it should but open the way to injury and insult. It was so long since they had been at liberty in the streets, that they felt lost there, and seemed quite undecided as to what they should do in this emergency. They, however, turned their steps towards what appeared to them to be the most populous part of the city, and hurried on, as best they might.

Dressed as they were in the coarsest manner, Edith felt that if she were to inquire the way to the residence and street where Sir Robert lived, she would most likely only be jeered and laughed at, as no one would believe, with the appearance she presented, that she could have any business that would call her into such a neighborhood. Reasoning

very correctly in this way, Edith inquired the way to Charing Cross, where she was comparatively acquainted with the localities, and from whence she felt confident that she could find the way with ease to the house of her kind benefactor. But it was already quite late to be abroad and unprotected, more especially in the district where they still were; indeed it was in the densest portion of St. Giles that Edith and Clara inquired the way to Charing Cross, and both the girls realized the critical situation in which they were placed, half fearing that some friend of Lancewood's who had seen them, might now recognize and detain them once more. It was such thoughts and fears as these that caused the poor girls, tired and exhausted as they were, to hurry forward with no measured step. Indeed more than once, when they believed themselves unobserved, they ran half the length of a street or square, then walked on again nearly out of breath.

At last it seemed as though their limbs would give way beneath them, and Edith leaned for a moment against the side of a house for support, while she held her aching sides with both her hands, and panted like an affrighted bird.

"You have no money, I suppose, Clara?" she asked of her companion.

"Not a penny."

"O, how unfortunate that I have not a trifle, now," she sighed.

"What for?"

"If we could only get into this hackney-coach," she answered, "we might be carried in a few moments directly to Sir Robert Brompton's house. It does not seem as if I could walk any further. Besides, Clara, how we both look to be in the streets in this dress. There too are those young men who have followed us from the last corner; how boisterous they are."

"I have nothing of any value to give the coachman," said Clara.

"Stay," said Edith, "I remember. Here's a plain gold ring that I have kept upon my finger ever since that horrid night, when I left my dear friends at Sir Robert's. I'll try if the coachman will carry us for that."

"We want to go to —— Square," said Edith approaching the man, and not having any money, I will give you this ring if you will carry us there at once. Wont you do it? I'll bless you if you will, from my very heart."

The man looked at her for a moment in surprise at the singular proposition, and read in Edith's eyes such an imploring look, that he seemed to change in his whole appearance and bearing towards her.

"What do you want to go there for, young woman, eh?" he asked.

"O, I have friends there, and I am very weak and ill, wont you carry us?"

The man was a rough but honest Irishman, by his appearance, and seemed to study the appearance of the girl for a moment as if to satisfy himself that he was not being deceived, and then said:

"Is that all the means you've got to give for the ride, eh?"

"It is all I have."

"And you're not guying me?"

"O no, upon my word I speak honestly."

"Well, never mind the ring," said the rough driver, "get in, my good girls, get in."

"You will not take the ring?"

"Niver a bit of it, my good girl."

"God bless you!" said Edith, as the two got in, and the rough driver cracked his whip.

It was a long distance from the coach stand to where Sir Robert Brompton lived, and as the coach rolled through street after street, and turned corner after corner, the two girls had ample time to review their present position, and to look back at their late achievement of the passage of the fearful vault, and of the almost miraculous escape from Lancewood's house. Edith, who was physically less able and strong than her companion, was too nervous to converse as they drew nearer and nearer to their place of destination, while Clara asked again and again how she should behave, and what she should say to the people where they were going, if they asked her about herself.

She almost trembled too at the idea of going into such a fine, magnificent house as Edith had so often described to her astonished ears, but then she tried to calm herself by thinking if good Mrs. Marlow was there, of whom her companion in misery had so often spoken, she at least would be good and kind to her, and she was sure she need not be afraid where she was. While both were thus reasoning and speculating within themselves, the hack fast

approached Sir Robert's residence, where the two girls at last got out; the honest driver still refusing the ring and hurrying away like one who felt repaid for a worthy act by the consciousness of right that he experienced within.

Edith looked after the honest Hibernian with a tear in her eye! The rough man had befriended her at a critical moment.

"Is this the house?" asked Clara almost in a whisper, as she looked on in wonder at the princely abode before them.

"Yes," said her companion, with her hands upon her brow, striving to still its rapid motion.

No wonder her heart beat so quickly; no wonder that her limbs trembled so beneath her; no wonder that she almost gasped for breath, on approaching so nearly again the only spot on earth that had been a true and happy home to her. Besides this, her physical strength had been much impaired and her feelings were less under control, otherwise she could hardly have wept outside the door.

"Edith you must go in first, and then if you think best I will come when you send for me."

"No, no, Clara," said Edith seizing her hand, "you shall go in with me, and if they receive me again, they must receive you also."

"But not at first, Edith, by and by. I will go in at the back door, and you can easily send for me," continued Clara, who was bewildered by the appearance of the house and its magnificence.

"Say no more, Clara. You have been good and kind to me, and we go together, if at all."

Clara held by her hand firmly, as she said this, but made no reply. She knew Edith well, and she felt that she would abide by what she had said, but still she could not help fearing that her welcome would be but a cold one at best under the singular circumstances that introduced her there, but still trusting to Edith's assurance, she felt that at any rate she was committing no crime in following her companion.

They paused and listened for more than a minute, before Edith could summon sufficient courage to ring the bell, while Clara, astonished at the magnificent appearance of the richly lighted and ornamented door-way, gazed in amazement, and as the servant admitted them, she seemed to lose herself in satisfying her curiosity, by gazing at every object which met her delighted and curious vision.

It is doubtful which of the two girls presented the most interesting picture at that moment, Edith with her plaintive and anxious look, seeking for those dear friends that she expected to find there, or Clara, who had now dropped her companion's hand, and gazed about her much as an Indian from the depth of the forest might do at his first glimpse of the refinements of civilization. Her eyes seemed to be riveted upon all things at once, and though she kept so close to Edith, yet her face was turned in all directions to observe what to her was such a curious array of richness and lavish ornaments. Her feelings were not unlike those of Edith, when a twelve month before she had entered that splendid abode for the first time. The numerous servants, the gorgeous lights and the brilliancy of every thing dazzled her, but following close to Edith she said nothing.

Poor child, so young and handsome, thy story is also to be written in these pages.

The next number of this work will be issued on Saturday, May 25th.

THE MISTAKE OF A LIFE-TIME.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE LOST FOUND.

"Such scenes had tempered with a pensive grace,
The maiden lustre of that faultless face;
Had hung a sad and dreamlike spell upon
The gliding music of her silver tone;
And shaded the soft soul which loved to lie,
In the deep pathos of that volumed eye."—O'Neil, or the Rebel.

We left Sir Robert and Walter heart sick at the failure of their purpose upon the rendezvous or headquarters of Bill the Bold, in searching which they were aided, as we have shown, by the police. By the preceding chapter, the reader has learned the reason why this search on the part of Sir Robert and his associates had produced no signs of her they sought. Singularly enough, the two girls had hardly closed the trap door after them and reached the wet footing at the base of the steps, before the police had entered the house. A very few moments sufficed to satisfy Sir Robert that Edith was not there, and as we have seen, the police were at once dismissed, and Walter and himself made their way home again.

The tea service had just been removed, and Sir Robert and Walter sat together, ruminating with sad faces upon their fresh disappointment. The bright polish of the elegant furniture cast back the glare of the fire with almost dazzling effect, while a rich clock upon the mantel-piece, with its ingenious machinery all visible through a transparent case, slowly and soberly ticked the passing moments. So quiet was the spacious and elegant apartment, that the tiny voice of the instrument seemed to be singularly and almost ominously loud, as it will sometimes seem in a sick room. Now and then, Sir Robert, half aroused from his fanciful thoughts, would raise his eyes to the clock, as if startled by its never varying steadiness, and the constant unremitting stroke that chronicled the footsteps of time towards eternity.

As they sat thus meditating, and now and then interchanging some single remark, suddenly Mrs. Marlow rushed into the room in a state of excitement that bordered on actual frenzy, exclaiming:

"Sir Robert, Sir Robert, O, Sir Robert!"

"Good gracious, Mrs. Marlow, what's the matter with you?"

"She's come, she's come."

"Who? What do you mean, Mrs. Marlow?" asked Sir Robert.

"She's come, she's come," continued the housekeeper, in an ecstasy of delight.

"Who has come?" asked Walter eagerly, and half suspecting the truth.

"Edith, Edith, the dear child!" sobbed the housekeeper.

"Where is she?" said Sir Robert, springing to his feet at the mention of her name, and

just in time to receive the embrace of the weeping girl, who ran into his arms.

"A just God be thanked!" said Sir Robert Brompton, in a hoarse voice, as he folded her tenderly to his heart, and held her there as though he feared some one stood ready to take her from him.

"Dear, dear Sir Robert," resumed the poor girl, all bathed in tears.

Then turning from her benefactor, Edith ran to Mrs. Marlow, and putting her arms about her neck, she kissed her again and again, while the kind-hearted housekeeper could only bite her lips, and sob like a child. Suddenly turning towards Walter, as though she had half forgotten herself, she came to him the very picture of frankness, and placing both her hands in his own, she said so truly and so earnestly, though perhaps with a slightly heightened color, as she spoke:

"I am too glad, too happy to see you again, Walter."

"Ah, Edith, this is a joy that we have all of us coveted this many-a-day," he answered, warmly pressing her hands.

The reader should realize the picture that parlor presented at this time, for it was one to be remembered in the thread of our plot, a tableau that must contrast strangely with the relative position of those parties, ere our story closes.

While this exciting and touching scene was going on between Sir Robert, Walter, Edith and Mrs. Marlow, there stood quite alone and neglected, just within the entrance of the door, a fifth party. It was Edith's late companion. She was looking at the scene before her with a trembling lip and full eye. Now she tried to read the expression of Sir Robert's face, and see if she might hope for welcome from him, and then she felt lighter at heart as her eyes fell upon the countenance of Mrs. Marlow, which seemed to her to be marked with a heart in every line of it. She loved Edith very, very dearly, and yet a little tinge of envy crossed her breast, as she witnessed the tenderness of her welcome.

At the splendid furniture and belongings of the room she gazed with undisguised astonishment. In her wildest dreams she had never depicted so much elegance and wealth, or indeed ever before seen anything of the sort, even of the humblest character. Her heavy shoes contrasted strangely with the soft velvet carpeting, and her coarse frock with the satin curtains, and damask furniture coverings. She thought of this, and seemed to shrink back nearer to the door, as though she felt that she was trespassing. But spite of all her coarseness of dress, there beamed forth from her really beautiful and expressive face, a pair of soft blue eyes large and playful, and lips of dainty freshness and color—parted now in surprise and discovering within, teeth of faultless regularity and whiteness. At a casual glance, she seemed to be the very counterpart of Edith herself, so strongly did they resemble each other.

"An apple cleft in twain, was not more twin
Than these two creatures."

It was only for a single moment that the poor girl was permitted to stand thus alone and neglected, for Edith now turning from Walter, observed her trying situation, and ran and kissed her in the excess of her joy, as she said:

"Dear Sir Robert, this is my friend Clara, my sister, I should call her, for she has been a dear, good one to me in my dismal confinement since I was forced away from here."

"If she has been kind to you, Edith, it is enough to make us friends at once," said Sir Robert, as he approached the spot where Clara stood, gazing upon her with intense interest.

"I cannot tell you, Mrs. Marlow, how kind and good Clara has been to me."

"Has she?" said the good housekeeper, taking Clara's hand kindly.

"How much they look alike, Sir Robert," said Walter, in surprise. Then turning to Edith again, he said, "you may well call her sister, since she resembles you so strongly."

"Dear, dear me," said Mrs. Marlow, affecting to be very much shocked at the appearance of the girls, but in reality trying to disguise the telltale tears. "Come with me, both of you, do quick, and I will get you some proper clothes. Now, Sir Robert, pray don't look so impatient, Edith shall come to you again in a very short time."

"Yes, Sir Robert," said Edith, turning and kissing him tenderly.

"Come to me in the library, Edith," he replied, when you are rested.

"I will, Sir Robert, for I have so much to tell you," she answered.

"Edith," said Walter, touching her upon the arm as she was speaking to Sir Robert, "you have not introduced your young friend to me yet, pray what is her name?"

"Thank you, Walter," she said, "for reminding me. I did forget."

"Clara, dear, this is Mr. Walter Manning, of whose kindness I have told you before."

A heightened color diffused itself over the young girl's face as Walter bowed to her.

"I feel as though I knew each one of you already. Edith has described you all so often to me," said Clara, modestly. "She has talked of nothing else but your goodness for these twelve months past, until through her I have loved you all without knowing you, except in your great kindness to her."

Sir Robert had been much affected before this, his voice had been hoarse, and his lips a little tremulous; but now, while he listened to this modest and unaffected speech, big drops rolled down his cheeks, and he was forced to turn away his head from those before him. They were the first tears he had shed for many long years.

"My good girl," said he, taking her hand tenderly, "believe yourself perfectly welcome here, and strive to be as happy as you can. Your kindness to Edith alone would claim the warmest gratitude from all who are in this house, did not your own modest spirit bespeak for you a generous reception. Are you an orphan, Clara?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then be indeed a sister to Edith, and share her welcome here."

"Live here like Edith, sir?"

"Certainly, Clara, that is what I mean."

"O, many, many thanks, sir," but I did not even think of that. I should not feel at home here. I told Edith when she persuaded me to run away with her, that if you would let me work for her and you, it might be perhaps pleasant, if you were willing. I know I could be useful, for I am used to it, I am indeed, sir."

Sir Robert was much affected as he listened intently to her voice, and observed her minutest expression of feature. It seemed to charm him, and win a way to his heart at once. After gazing upon her a moment, and from her to Edith, he parted the rich hair that lay so negligently about her head, as he said kindly:

"We shall be good friends, Clara, I know that we shall; talk no more about work, my good girl, but go with Mrs. Marlow, and let her exert her good taste and kindness upon you."

"Here, Mrs. Marlow, take both these children. I need not ask you to be kind to them."

Mrs. Marlow said nothing, but she looked volumes of tender solicitude, as she led them away with her.

What a change had an hour made in the appearance of everything about Sir Robert Brompton's household. The sad expression that seemed the predominating characteristic of one and all, had given place to bright and cheerful looks, and all were full of the satisfaction that they read in Sir Robert Brompton's face. Good Mrs. Marlow went blustering about in all directions, now here, now there, ordering the best of everything for the new comers, now baths, now fresh linen, now a hosier, now a milliner, now a coiffeur, until at last both Edith and Clara were almost completely overpowered with her kindness. The truth was, the young girls were extremely worn out by their late adventures, and required some wholesome nourishment and quiet sleep, more than aught else. The former was supplied to them profusely and of the nicest kind, and after enjoying a grateful bath, tempered to soothe their chilled and aching limbs, and a luxury that both of the girls had long been a stranger to—clean linen, they were placed on soft downy beds, the rich curtains of which shut out the light, and the luxuriance of which wooed them to sleep. There their soft slumbers were watched over by the good Mrs. Marlow for a large share of the night.

> "—Dream on, blest pair,
> Yet happier if you knew your happiness,
> And knew to know no more!"

A casual observer could hardly have realized that the two bright beaming and happy faces that were opposite to Sir Robert and Walter at the breakfast table on the morning succeeding the adventures we have described, were the same two, who, pale and haggard, had issued on the preceding evening from the mouth of the subterranean passage on the banks of the Thames. How happy they looked now, what quiet joy shone in their eyes!

Edith, over happy at her return to those she loved; Clara, all gratitude and amazement at the sumptuousness that she observed around her. To look at them only for a moment, it would be hard to say which of the two might be called the handsomest. Edith had the advantage of her former experience and cultivation to aid her, although this had been enjoyed but for a brief twelvemonth. But Walter Manning observed that notwithstanding Clara was all impulse and curiosity in the contemplation of everything around her, yet she was really very far from being awkward. Indeed there seemed to be a native grace and gentility about her manner, in spite of her humble origin. Her form, which was very fine and slightly more full in outline than her companion's, was very pliant and easy; though her curiosity led her to assume an original and peculiar attitude, still she was very far from appearing as lacking ease or grace; she possessed them by nature.

"You slept soundly, I hope," said Sir Robert, cheerfully.

"Both of us," replied Edith, "we never woke until nearly ten this morning."

"I feared you might be too tired to fall easily to sleep."

"O no," replied Edith, "and yet I did lie awake for nearly an hour."

"And why?"

"O, I was thinking, Sir Robert."

"Of what, Edith; what should keep you awake, pray?"

"I was thinking how much the night resembled that when I was first brought here," she replied.

Thus they chatted together, Clara being almost too much engaged in familiarizing herself with matters around her, to pretend to talk much, although she answered cheerfully when Sir Robert or Walter addressed her.

"This evening, Edith, you must give me a history of your adventures for the long time you have been away from us."

"Yes, Sir Robert, I will do so."

"And Clara's story, too," said Walter Manning, "we would hear that."

"If you wish it, with all my heart," she replied, smiling pleasantly.

Edith was beyond a doubt more sentimentally lovely than Clara, her epres sion evincing more of her soul in every glance than did her companion. Clara was far more lively and vivacious by nature than Edith, and her beauty, like her spirits, seemed in a degree to come and go as her face became suddenly animated with interest, or gently settled into repose. There appeared to be ever lurking beneath the surface a half suppressed flood of mirth and cheerfulness, while her companion was at times perhaps almost melancholy.

Both had dark, soft and most luxuriant hair, blue eyes, and features, which in profile were quite classical. They were very nearly of the same size, Clara, perhaps was a little the smallest, both were about the same age, being hardly fifteen. Perhaps in all London, two such happy, expressive and handsome faces might not elsewhere be found, as Mrs. Marlow boldly said. Both soon fell happily and pleasantly into the new routine and discipline of life that surrounded them, improving almost hourly in many respects, while Edith, by her constant endeavors, helped Clara forward most surprisingly in the studies that both at once applied themselves to, until their instructers declared that never were pupils more apt and industrious.

It would be hard to draw a picture of a happier household than Sir Robert Brompton's, at this period; the two new comers growing more and more interesting and beautiful every day, and the whole household becoming no less endeared to Clara, for her generous, self-sacrificing and ever-cheerful disposition, than they had been to Edith before. Sir Robert, though he evidently held Edith as his favorite, still seemed to enjoy a marked and constant interest in the society of Clara. He would often sit by her side, and listen to a relation of her past life, as far as she knew it herself, and was even content to sit by her, hours together, and hear her read to him, watching with interest her expression, appearing to gain peculiar pleasure from the soft and musical intonations of her sweet voice.

Walter Manning seemed strongly attracted towards them both, exerting all his powers and versatile talent to please and amuse them. His attention was directed to neither in particular, but he seemed devoted to both alike. Clara's quick wit and sparkling humor kept them ever merry, and Edith's tender and

gentle sweetness of disposition bound them nearly together in the silken cords of sisterly and true regard. Indeed, the two seemed to vie with each other, as to which should be the most kind and most considerate to the other. The memory of the suffering they had shared together served as another tie between them, and its recollections served for converse, as they compared it with their present home.

In the mean time, Sir Robert Brompton, having fully heard the story of Edith's imprisonment by the burglar who styled himself Lancewood, took measures for a second visit thither with a strong body of police, for the purpose of breaking up this den of infamy. But although they found all the localities as described, yet the escape of the two girls had been sufficient warning for him to move his quarters, for he knew full well, that they would be importuned to witness against him, and thus without further evidence, lead to his conviction by the laws.

For these reasons, he left at once after discovering the escape, which was to him a most unaccountable affair, since he knew nothing of the subterranean passage, a place which he might himself have turned to good account. He removed, as we have said, to another part of the town, and when the police surrounded the house and entered it, they found that the bird had flown, though in the hurry, some valuables and burglars' tools had been left behind. The secret passage was also fully explored by the police, and found to have been used for the purpose of smuggling and of storing contraband goods, tobacco, spirits and the like. The passage was destroyed by the authorities, who decided that it could serve no good purpose, and might aid crime.

Time passed swiftly on as it had ever done, as it is doing now, and as it will do to-morrow. Edith and her companion Clara evinced steady improvement in all lady-like accomplishments, and in diligence. Indeed, as it regarded brilliancy, Clara eclipsed Edith, there was more sparkling vivaciousness in her disposition, than in that of Edith, whose even sweetness of disposition was none the less lovely for the comparison. Edith was like a bright, beautiful star, that burns pure and steady in its sphere, Clara was more like a comet, startling and almost glorious in its majestic beauty and flashing brilliancy. Sometimes her natural ability, surprising wit and power of repartee would astonish Sir Robert, who would turn to Walter Manning and say:

"Never boast to me of blood and descent again; there is a child born in the very humblest sphere of life, who would startle the whole court, were she to mingle there, with her elegance of thought and grace of manner, and yet she has been scarce half a year living in a civilized condition. Blood indeed!"

"I acknowledge, Sir Robert, that your example is ahead of my argument."

"She is very handsome and interesting, Walter," replied Sir Robert, "but she has not that combination of womanly beauty that Edith possesses; do you think she has?"

"Spare me, Sir Robert, I cannot be so partial as to answer that question."

And thus went matters at the house of Sir Robert Brompton at this period.

CHAPTER XXX.

A DOMESTIC SCENE.

" They grew in beauty side by side
They filled one home with glee." HEMANS.

IT will be remembered that the young pilot, Walter Manning, had now for the term of two years devoted his time to the study of the law, a profession which seemed to him to open for his ambitious hopes and aspirations, the gates to fame, and through its means he hoped yet to be able to win his way to honorable distinction. His association with Sir Robert Brompton was the same as it had ever been, and though there was such a disparity in their ages, yet they seemed like brothers together, or perhaps still more like father and son. Thus their amusements and hours of relaxation were mainly spent together, though in fact the attraction that drew them to their own fireside was so strong, that most of the time they were at home, enjoying the society of Edith and Clara, who were never happier than when with them.

To the casual reader it may seem a little singular that one who was so far advanced in life as Sir Robert was, should have chosen for a companion one so young as Walter. But the fact was, the singular accident which had brought them together in the first place, and the attendant circumstances, which we have related, had done much to render them firm friends, had there been no other prompting causes; but these were not wanting, for there were many traits of character in both (although there was so much difference in their ages), which were so similar and so of a nature to draw them together, that it was easily accounted for to those who knew them best. There was evidently another reason why Sir Robert looked upon Walter with so much interest; in the first place, his heart seemed every day more and more wrapped up in Edith, and it is useless to disguise the fact, that he had evidently in his mind arranged that Walter should finally marry her, though he had never so much as hinted the matter to either of them.

"Walter, you remain too constantly at home, and too much engaged over your books," said Sir Robert.

"O no, Sir Robert, I enjoy myself very much at home."

"But it would be an improvement for you to mingle more in society."

"Do you think so?"

"Yes. Go to the clubs, and make new acquaintances, and study human nature."

"Perhaps you are right, Sir Robert."

Walter was actually of a generous and impulsive disposition, though very studious,

but he acted upon Sir Robert's suggestion, and was in the habit of visiting the clubs and mingling with the gay world of London society. The truth was, his elder companion and firm friend had too much confidence in Walter to fear that he would suffer by the contact; and he trusted to his home associations, which he knew to be so strong upon him, as well as the influence that he himself possessed over him, to prevent any contaminating effects upon his protege. Sir Robert knew that the experience which Walter would gain in this way was not without its value, to a man whose profession was such as to call into active play a full knowledge of human nature; besides, he was one of that class of philosophers who reason, that a young man should *see* vice as well as virtue, and thus forewarned, become forearmed, and the better fitted to combat with it.

As time rolled on it would be unreasonable to suppose for a moment, that Walter Manning, a high-spirited, handsome and manly youth, did not fully entertain the tender feelings naturally induced by his intimacy with two such lovely females as Edith and Clara. He felt inwardly drawn towards them, to Edith for the soft, winning and tender character of her whole spirits, and towards Clara for her free, unconstrained and constant playfulness and wit.

To look upon the two young girls now, you would have supposed them both born to the sphere which they graced so fittingly. Their occupations were of the most intellectual character, and of course imparted that mental grace which more than all else, is so winning and beautiful. In their conversation and communion with Walter, they seemed like his sisters; there was no coyness, no reserve, no coquetry, they both loved him as a dear, familiar friend. Even Sir Robert, who often watched them with cautious eye, more especially in relation to the plan which he had formed in his own heart, could detect not the least partiality on Walter's part, though he manifested at all times how agreeable their society was to him, and indeed sought it too constantly and devotedly not to lead his patron to believe that his heart was engaged there. To a man of Sir Robert's leisure, his hopes even if simple ones, became subjects of much thought in his own mind, and that of a union between Edith and Walter seemed to have been dwelt upon by him until his heart was much set upon its consummation; and yet he was too delicate to intimate, even by the slightest token to either of the parties, that such was his desire.

But Walter, in the meantime, kept on the even tenor of his way, thinking no doubt—

> "How happy could I be with either,
> Were t'other dear charmer away."

How many have been situated like Walter Manning, and how many have said these very words in their hearts!

Sir Robert Brompton's standing and wealth were such as to attract many fashionable and even noble visiters to his house, though his taste was of that cast that was not calculated to attract much display and parade about him. Still everything here was in most excellent taste; the pictures were so admirable, the statues so finely executed, and the ornaments that graced his drawing rooms so curious and so rich, that many persons of taste and refinement visited them, attracted by these subjects strongly, as well as by Sir Robert's generous hospitality.

Edith and Clara were too young to go into society, had either they or Sir Robert desired it, but this was not the case. Both they and Sir Robert preferred retirement, but they were of course introduced to such as were frequent visiters to their patron's house, and the idea was left to be inferred, or was perhaps thrown out by Sir Robert himself, that they were children of a poor but well beloved friend, at whose decease he had promised to adopt them as his own. The good sense of the girls themselves was of course sufficient guard on their tongues, while the high-bred persons who frequented the drawing rooms at Sir Robert Brompton's, were too polite and considerate to refer to a subject that they might naturally suppose to be a delicate one with them.

This was an important matter as it regarded the settling o the young girls' positions, and was perhaps the most probable story that could have been invented, inasmuch as no one doubted it for one moment, and the matter once understood to be as we have said, it induced no further consideration, but was forgotten in the present position that they occupied.

Seeing by the character of the society into which they were gradually thrown, the immense importance and even necessity of cultivation and mental improvement, the two friends were led to the most unremitting exertions in order to instruct themselves, and with the advantage which Sir Robert so liberally supplied, of the best masters in all branches, they made most wonderful progress. On the part of Clara there was a secret incentive which operated strongly to cause her to make the most determined effort to improve, and that was that she might fully equal, if not excel Edith. There is emulation in everything, and though she loved her dear companion with all her heart, and like a fond sister, still a secret wish to excel her in their studies, caused Clara to labor upon her books many an hour when Edith slept. The improvement of Clara was in turn an incentive for fresh exertion for Edith, and thus they both went on in their studies, advancing rapidly.

"I don't know what to make of those two girls," said a young sprig of aristocracy to a friend one evening, at Sir Robert Brompton's house. "They are as unassuming and intelligent as they are beautiful."

"Beautiful indeed," said her companion, earnestly. He was a frequenter of the house, and the son of a proud family, having himself just attained to the title and estate of Lord Amidown, his father.

Edith and Clara were engaged at this moment with a group of friends in an opposite corner of the apartment.

"To my mind, Amidown, Clara is by far the most handsome and entertaining of the two. See now how she carries the company with her," said he who had first spoken.

"Do you think so?" said Lord Amidown, still regarding them intently.

"Certainly, I do. There, do you not see how she keeps them in a broad laugh? Why, Amidown, her wit is as keen as that of the king's jester, and yet as delicate and finely tempered as a Damascus blade."

"She may be more entertaining, I grant you," said Lord Amidown, still observing them, "but to my mind, Edith is by far the most interesting. Did you ever mark how very soft her eyes are; and of what a lovely hue?"

"Yes, I have observed that they were blue," was the reply.

"Ah, but *such* a blue," replied Lord Amidown, with emphasis.

"Yes, but Clara's eyes are blue also," replied his companion.

"True, but—"

"But what, Amidown."

"Clara's eyes are blue," continued his lordship. "I do not dispute that, they are full of life too, but they lack that plaintive sweetness, that speaks of full confidence and reliance, giving constant token of a soul too pure to suspect another of wrong, and too innocent to buffet with the selfish and calloused world."

"Ho, ho, Amidown," said his friend, looking at his lordship from beneath his contracted eyebrows, and following his exclamation by a low, half suppressed whistle.

"Well, what's the matter now?" asked his lordship in surprise.

"So, so, sits the wind in that quarter?" continued his companion, with a half taunting voice. "We shall have a duel and bloodshed, yet, my lord. Why look ye, this young East Indian, Walter Manning, is dead in love with Edith, and would eat fire itself before he'd yield her up, or give an inch of ground to any man. Besides, my lord," whispered his friend significantly, "it is said that he is a crack shot, sure at fifteen paces."

"Fie, fie," said his lordship, "this is no sub ject for nonsense."

"True, it is assuming rather a serious turn,' said the other, laughing.

"But do you think that Mr. Manning loves her?" asked Lord Amidown.

"To be sure he does. See her lean upon his arm now as they go over to talk about that picture, by this light. Faith, she has a queenly form. Everybody says they are in love, and what everybody says must be true."

"But I have observed him closely to-night," said Lord Amidown, "and I doubt if he does not pay fully as earnest court to Clara, as he does to Edith. If he has a partiality in that quarter, he does not show it. Egad, I envy him his brotherly relation to them, all three adopted children of the rich old fellow, Sir Robert."

"He picked up young Manning somewhere in the East Indies, eh?"

"Yes, didn't you ever know the story of their being cast away together?"

"No."

"It's as good as a novel. I'll tell it to you some time."

"I'll remind you of it at the club, and you shall tell me the whole of it. In the meantime, my lord, let us approach the party opposite, and observe the game more closely. Mark me, Walter is playing his cards to Edith."

The two young gentlemen walked leisurely across the spacious room where this conversation had taken place, and joined the little knot of which Edith and Clara were the centre. Of course they did not let it appear that they had been talking of them, but seemed to have lounged to their side after a circuit of the room, during which they had ostensibly been engaged in a minute inspection of several of the paintings that graced the walls.

"Ah, here is Lord Amidown," said Clara, as he drew near to the little circle, "he will be my champion in this all-important controversy. Won't you couch a lance for me, my lord?"

"Most assuredly, Miss Clara," said his lordship quickly. "Count on me against whatever odds. But pray what is the subject in dispute, if I may be so bold as to ask?"

"Hold," said Clara, "you are first to pledge yourself to my support."

"O, yes. I have taken your side of the argument already."

"Well, then you must know, my lord," began Clara, "that we were speaking of national costumes. Mr. Manning is in favor of our good old English fashion of dressing like men and women, as he calls it. Sir Robert likes best the old Roman toga and sandals,—though, between ourselves, my lord, I shrewdly suspect he assumes the preference merely for argument's sake. Edith affects the Italian and Spanish modes—which puzzles me the more because Edith is always right in almost everything. Mr. Steaton here, thinks the Swiss peasantry a model—but I was just hoping to win him over to my side, when you came up, my lord, and as you are not committed as yet, why I am most fortunate."

"And which choice is yours, or perhaps I should say, *ours*?"

"I have been advocating the grace and beauty of the Turkish costume," she replied. "And now my lord, honestly, which of them all do you advocate?"

"Upon my allegiance?" asked his lordship, referring to his promise to support her side of the argument.

"No, but honestly, my lord."

"If I could see Miss Clara Brompton in a Turkish dress, beyond a doubt I should ever after be a devotee to the style of the East, but since I have only had the pleasure of seeing her grace an honest English fashion, I shall be compelled to agree with Mr. Manning, that it is decidedly my favorite."

"You are as ready as a barrister, my lord, and as shrewd, and non-commital; but I acknowledge that I am in the minority, that I am thoroughly outwitted, and that our English fashion has carried the day, though I did depend upon you, my lord, for a casting vote in my favor," she said, turning a playful glance at Lord Amidown.

"I recant, I recant," said Lord Amidown, quickly, won by the half coquettish, half earnest appeal that he had interpreted in the glance from Clara's lovely eyes. "I do recant, upon my soul. I am certainly in favor of the turban and the yashmack; in fact it is a deplorable truth, that none but the Orientals know how to dress gracefully."

"Excellent; a convert, a convert," exclaimed Clara, in seeming delight.

Edith clapped her hands playfully, and laughed at the scene.

"I'll shiver a lance with him who gainsays it," continued Lord Amidown, half in earnest, warmed up by the recent smiles of Clara, who thanked him for thus supporting her choice.

"To my mind," said Walter, trying to provoke the playful controversy still farther, "a Turkish lady with all her flowing ampleness of dress, is not a bad representative of a ship's canvass all spread, alow and aloft."

"Now, Walter," said Clara, "if you cast such reflections upon my choice, I will scold you for bringing in your nautical comparisons, which I cannot teach you to drop."

"Excuse me," said Walter, laughing, "I'll trespass no more."

"You support Miss Clara in her Moslem fancy, then?" asked Mr. Steaton of his lordship.

"Most decidedly," he replied. "I will have a turban and half moon engraven upon my seal."

"Thou gallant and devoted knight," said Clara, laughing.

"And yet one can't deny that the Neapolitan costume is novel, graceful and picturesque," continued Lord Amidown, catching the sweet expression of Edith's face turned towards him.

"There, what reliance can be placed upon the faith of man! O, you fickle monster," exclaimed Clara, laughing heartily, "why that was Edith's vote."

"Indeed; well, upon a second thought," said Lord Amidown, laughing, though a little confused, "I think half the dress should be Turkish, and the other half Italian."

"How, my lord," said Clara, while her eyes sparkled with fire and humor, "the right side in one mode, and the left in another, as Punch wears his colors at the show?"

"No, no, no!" exclaimed his lordship, holding up both hands.

"O, I see, you mean latitudinally, not longitudinally," said Clara, laughing heartily, and making the motions with her hands to signify her meaning.

"Upon my word, Miss Clara, I believe it would be *safer* to be on your side," said Lord Amidown.

Though as they passed to the supper room that night, Edith leaned upon Walter's arm, and Clara upon Lord Amidown's, yet to a careful observer, one who could read the wiles of the heart, it was apparent that the gentlemen would have been pleased to have exchanged partners. Even Sir Robert thought he noticed this, and as it materially affected the spirit of the plans he had formed, he mused thoughtfully upon the indication. Before they left the supper room again to return to the parlor, Sir Robert joined them, resolved if possible to test the suspicion which had found place in his mind, and he cunningly managed it so that in the return, Walter and Lord Amidown had in reality changed partners. The result of this change was such as to make him more thoughtful and anxious within his own breast than before.

Edith, though perhaps of a more retiring disposition than her young friend Clara, was yet by no means tame. Her spirits were gay and flowing, but she seemed rather to follow her companion's lead than to advance herself, and yet in conversation she evinced that power of mind and soundness of judgment which we are wont to look for only in those whose experience has been of the most extended character. Though all were delighted and attracted by the gay, overflowing spirits and quick wit of Clara, yet it might be doubted if they thought of her when she was absent, so much or so tenderly as they did of Edith. The impression she left upon the mind was more evanescent, though no less pleasing than that of her adopted sister.

Sir Robert Brompton seemed much bound up in the two children, as he familiarly called them, and one thing was very certain, they both loved him with the most undivided and sincere affection. If he strove to think within himself that he loved Edith better than Clara, the gentle voice and winning manner of the new comer sprang up before his mind's eye, and he found that there was an undefinable fascination about her voice, her manner, and her presence, that had most indelibly fixed her also upon his heart.

Thus Sir Robert often found himself watching her movements and expression of face, and listening most intently to the sweet music of her voice, all forgetful of the presence of those about him, or the associations of the hour and the place. All these influences appeared to force themselves upon his mind; they were not the result of any endeavor to realize an interest in the subject of them, but seemed to come over Clara's protector with irresistible force.

Notwithstanding this affection for her companion, he still seemed to cherish for Edith the warmest regard and love, and indeed, as we have before said, earnestly hoped to see her one day the wife of Walter Manning, whom he regarded with but little less affection; and he looked upon the two as his future heirs, or rather his principal heirs, for he found himself so nearly allied in his regard for Clara, that he had promised himself to appropriate for her benefit a most princely endowment. And her patron had told her this in his kindness.

Sir Robert had more than once resolved to talk seriously with Walter upon the matter to which we have referred, but somehow delicacy

always forbade the first advance, and though he still had the subject of their future union very near at heart, yet he never seemed to have the necessary spirit to broach the subject to Walter. The late scene in the drawing room which Sir Robert had closely noted, had given him much trouble, and to almost any one present on that occasion, it was very evident that Walter was more at home with Clara than with Edith.

"Walter," said Sir Robert, one day about this time, "you are very intimate with Edith and Clara."

"Intimate, Sir Robert?"

"Yes, I mean to say that you seem never so happy as when in their company."

"That is true, Sir Robert, I am never so happy as when with them."

"Or perhaps it would be more correct to say, when with *her*."

"Which, Sir Robert?" asked Walter, coloring not a little.

"Which? why the one you most prefer, of course, Walter."

Walter saw at once the meaning of Sir Robert's query, but let his preference be what it might, he was not prepared to express it to any one, not even to Sir Robert, whom he deemed to be his best friend.

Sir Robert saw this reluctance, and of course said no more upon the subject, though he had hoped to satisfy his mind upon a subject which was most nearly allied to his peace of mind.

"See you at the club to-night, Walter?" he asked, turning away.

"Most likely I shall drop in by twelve, Sir Robert," he answered.

We do not wish to intimate that Walter Manning had seriously said to himself within his own heart that he preferred Clara to Edith. By no means, nor had his conduct decidedly evinced any token of this character. If he did prefer her, he had never yet realized the fact, but that he had entertained something more than a brotherly interest and regard for Edith before the time of her abduction, he had even acknowledged again and again to himself, but to Edith herself he had never said a syllable to this effect.

As it regarded his feelings towards Clara, he was attached to her by her companionable qualities, pleased with her wit and spirit, and yet not so much so as to fail in rendering to Edith the constant and grateful attention that he had ever accorded to her, and with doubtless as much pleasure both to himself and her as ever.

Indeed the fact of his more earnest suit to Clara had seemed to render him more free and easy with Edith than he had ever been before, for though she loved him as an earnest friend, yet when he had thought himself most fondly attached to her, she at heart was the same as now.

"To him she was
Even as a sister—but no more."

Still there was an attendant delicacy that it was impossible not to realize under such circumstances, that was now entirely removed It even gave Edith no little pleasure to see Walter so intimate and so kind to Clara, and both of them felt that they had Edith's kindest and most constant regard. Walter had even thought of making a confident of Edith touching his regard for her companion, and more especially since he had become convinced by observation that Lord Amidown was so warmly attached to her. He thought that some such thing might serve to settle the matter between them as to the regard he had himself once borne for her.

As to the girls themselves, we have said nothing thus far touching the secret promptings of their hearts. Perhaps they had no fixed thoughts upon the subject. They were most happy, grateful, and pleased with Walter, and with every one who showed them marked kindness. Both Edith and Clara were in reality too young to have any settled preference as it regarded the matters of the heart; but these passions were soon to be developed, as the thread of the story will show.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE GAMBLER.

Dig as much gold, boys, as you like, but don't gamble. FREMONT.

ABOUT eleven o'clock one night, not long subsequent to the date of our last chapter, Sir Robert Brompton found himself with a party of gay friends coming out of the opera house, when one of them suggested that they should order their vehicles to drive round to St. James street, and drop into some one of the numerous gambling houses, for variety's sake, and take an observation as to how they carried sail there. It would be a change in the ordinary routine of life, and they were weary of the stupidity of the town.

None of the associates of Sir Robert were of a class upon whom such a visit could possibly exercise any hurtful influence, being almost without an exception men who had long since settled in life, and had lived their day of dissipation and recklessness years gone by, men mostly of his own age, with whom he was accustomed to meet at the clubs, and now and then to visit the opera with, or to join over the convivial board on social occasions. This being the case, and there still being a full hour before the usual supper time, the party generally consented to the proposal, and they drove round to the most celebrated of the gaming hells.

Paying the entrance fee at the door, the party entered the establishment, and lounging into the splendidly furnished saloon, soon separated into couples, or strolled here and there among the excited players. Most of these were young men taking their first lessons in the hateful vice, and buying experience at a fearful risk and expense.

Sir Robert looked with a secret shudder upon the forlorn and hopeless expression of more than one face, the owner of which had lost doubtless his last penny. In some he could read the demon-like passions that led them on to stake hundred after hundred, until perhaps a momentary change made them winners, and then he observed the almost assassin-like spirit that beamed from their eyes as they gathered in the golden pile once more, seeming to gloat over it as they did so. "Is it possible," he said to himself, "that men endowed with souls, and the powers of intellect, will voluntarily make such slaves, such fools of themselves, losing as they must do, all self-respect, and bondaging themselves to the spirit of evil?"

Those who permanently held these tables, were always experienced gamblers, employed by the establishment upon a share of the profits, as well as a fixed salary. These were chosen for their cunning, and perhaps not unfrequently, for their ability at intrigue and

cheating, for there never was an *honest* gambler; indeed such a case would form a paradox. In a few instances females were employed, and here and there among the gaming tables, Sir Robert saw one of this class, filling the banker's chair. These employees were chosen first for their attractive qualities as it regarded their personal beauty and manners, and then for the possession of those qualities which best adapted them to play the evil part that was expected of them. It is true that such were generally calculated as decoys for new beginners, and old hands rarely played at these tables. But they played indiscriminately with all who visited this temple of fortune, as the gambling saloon was denominated in rich gilt letters over the arched and richly ornamented entrance. Everything was in a style of splendor calculated to dazzle and bewilder the uninitiated.

The controlling mind that governed the gambling house referred to, must have been a master spirit, though its powers were exerted for evil. A consummate knowledge of human nature and the habits of men of the world, could alone have dictated so perfect an arrangement in all respects, one so well calculated to win and attract the visiters to come again. The principal saloon or gaming room, lined with mirrors in gilt frames, was dazzling in its brilliancy; the ceiling and cornice work elaborately gilded and painted in fresco. The furniture is all solid and of the most costly and *recherche* pattern. But let us turn for a moment into this ante-room; it is a supper hall, where a most sumptuous and free repast is nightly supplied, and where the choicest and best wines are liberally furnished without charge, for the cunning proprietor knows full well that its potent influence will presently unloose the purse strings of those who partake, when they shall retire to the bazard room.

All these belongings Sir Robert minutely inspected, and although they were not absolutely new to his experience, yet they suggested a train of reflections that a careful observer might have detected in his eyes and manner.

At this moment he saw a person draw near to one of the tables referred to, and at which a female presided. The stranger placed a hundred pounds upon the velvet cloth of the table, and bowing to the female, indicated his challenge. Sir Robert paused for a moment to witness the result of the hazard, and see which should be the winner. A few seconds of time decided the stake, and he saw that the female had lost. It seemed, however, not to disconcert her at all, but to be too much a matter of business to create any great degree of feeling as it regarded the result. She who held the bank was in many respects a remarkable person, rather tall and commanding in figure, with a fine, expressive and intellectual face, but yet Sir Robert could see that constant excitement caused by her peculiar occupation had given it premature lines, and a deep shadowing of care and thoughtfulness that seemed to his suggestive mind to be the record of past crime and misery, and the memory as well of many a noble and generous heart that she had helped to destroy. Once she caught Sir Robert's eye bent upon her while his mind was thus exercised, and seeming to read the thoughts that rushed thickly upon his brain, her own eyes sunk at once, and Sir Robert thought he marked a heightened color upon her cheek, and a quickened breathing in her he gazed upon.

He sighed himself at the picture before him, but said nothing as he carefully observed the manner of the girl. That which we have described had all passed in a moment of time.

"Do you double?" she asked, looking at the winner, while she shook the dice enticingly towards him.

"Double," answered the one addressed, quietly, while the money was left in the centre of the table before her.

"First, if you please," he said, conceding the throw to her, and then taking the die, he followed her with a quick, careless throw, that showed he was no stranger to the game he was playing.

The number that each had made was registered, still the gentleman had won.

"Double again?" asked the female, complacently, looking in his face.

"Certainly, if you please," said the winner, moving the four hundred pounds into one pile for her to cover.

"Good," said the female, taking the necessary sum from the drawer before her.

The money was at once set, the dice as quickly thrown, and the female looked up with a marked expression of surprise as she observed

that fortune had a third time favored her antagonist. The eight hundred pounds were allowed to remain upon the table and the bank meeting the stakes, sixteen hundred now lay exposed before them and subject to the next throw of the fickle dice. Each party threw the allotted number of times, when a quick glow upon the female's face and an impatient biting of the lip, showed that she had again, to her astonishment, lost the game. But knowing full well that he who doubles constantly must eventually lose, she said, with a forced smile:

"Will you set me once more, sir?" at the same time adding to the pile of bank notes before them two little bags, making the whole sum three thousand two hundred pounds.

"Certainly," said the winner, in reply to her request, and whose good fortune seemed not to elate him in the least. "Do the bags contain the necessary sum?"

"Yes, they are labelled."

"Very good, proceed."

This time the female seemed to use more caution than before, and to be slower in her throw of the dice. In the three casts she scored *thirty-six*, a high number, and she looked at her antagonist with ill suppressed satisfaction and with an increased glow upon her cheek, that said in dumb show, "beat that if you can, sir; fortune runs not all one way." There were other faces now gathered about them that sided with her, and expressed as much in their looks.

The gentleman threw again with a steady hand as before, when the female cried:

"Eighteen!"

"Eighteen," repeated a half score of interested spectators.

Again the dice rattled in the little leather box, and lay upon the table.

"Twelve!" said the female, now rising in her excitement and bending over the table.

"Twelve," again repeated the by-standers, little less interested.

Once more the dice were raised and cast carelessly upon the table.

"Twelve!" repeated the female, sinking back in her chair, with the greatest disappointment. "This is very strange," she continued, turning to a friend by her side, who had also been observing the game.

A smile only played about the mouth of the winner; he spoke not a word. He had thrown *forty-two*, and the money was his, though he did not put his hands upon it, preferring rather to mark the expression of the female before him. Sir Robert thought that he seemed to enjoy the pain and disappointment of his antagonist far more than he did the winnings that lay before him. It was impossible for the woman to disguise her feelings and her extraordinary chagrin. The loss had excited her so much that she was forced to toss her feet and drum upon the table with her hand, to prevent the discovery of the tremor that actually shook her frame.

Two or three persons who had been close observers of the singular game, stepped up to the stranger as they noticed that he still left the money upon the table, and without hesitation, though manifestly strangers to him, asked him if it was possible that he could be so imprudent as to tempt the chances of the game still farther? "Fortune has strangely smiled upon you to-night," said one close by his side, "but if you tempt her too far, she may frown in turn." To all he only returned a half vacant smile, and seemed still to glance from the money to the female, and laugh again, as though he were studying her feelings at her great loss. She in the meantime regarded him with mingled surprise and regret, while all paused to see what he would do. At last relieving his breast by a long drawn sigh, and arousing to a new consciousness of things about him, he said:

"Will madame double?"

"Again?" asked the female, in amazement at his temerity.

"Again," he answered.

"Certainly," she said, borrowing a part of the necessary sum from an adjoining table.

"All being prepared and the money properly stacked, the stranger said:

"Throw first, if you please."

The female paused for a moment; she felt confident that the extraordinary luck which had fallen to the stranger's share could not still favor him, but yet she threw the dice three times and scored:

"*Forty*," she exclaimed, in an excited tone; "but a *miracle* can beat even that," she continued, sarcastically.

Her antagonist seemed to have no words to spare; he answered her not, but smiling

blandly, took the dice, and throwing them three times, smiled again, as a half dozen persons exclaimed:

"*Forty!*"

"Forty—a tie," said the female, in amazement. "Do you withdraw now, or shall a single throw decide it?"

"It is the best way," said the stranger, "and the shortest. Let a single throw decide between us which takes the stakes."

The extraordinary fortune that had attended the winner had, as we have already said, drawn many curious witnesses about the table where he was playing, and even Sir Robert found his own interest of no slight character; he watched the result with the warmest curiosity, and in common with the rest now drew still nearer to the parties to note the final throw that should decide the ownership of so much money. Even in that place it was unusual to see so large a sum staked at once, as no thoughtful person ever permits himself to double upon the winning certainly more than once, but the oldest gamblers play for moderate sums at a single chance, unless they play unfairly.

As had been the case before, the female threw first, and with a voice that betrayed her feelings, exclaimed:

"Eighteen!"

This he could not beat: it was the highest single number. He might *equal* it, and thus there would be another tie. This he knew very well, and also that according to every precedent, he was sure to lose. But he was still unruffled, smiled, and threw the dice as calmly as he yet had done in the game.

"Twelve!" said the female, with a startled energy that caused her voice to be heard distinctly in every part of the room, while she gathered in the money into the bank, and arranged her table once more for fresh play.

A moment's pause ensued, when the female asked, with a smile:

"Will you play again?"

There was no reply, the gambler seemed to have forgotten himself.

"Will you play once more?" repeated the woman, in a louder tone.

The gambler started as from a reverie, and answered quickly:

"Not to-night, not to-night."

"You are satisfied?" she asked, blandly.

"Entirely."

"You lose like a hero," said a rough person by his side.

"Sir?" said the strange man, in a tone that made the speaker recoil.

"I said you lost like a hero," repeated the other, less boisterously.

"It is my own business, sir, and concerns myself alone," said the gambler, frowning darkly upon the other, as he turned to go away.

Wondering at the singular game he had played, and at the coolness that could enable a man to remain unmoved, and see so much money one moment his and the next lost forever, Sir Robert examined him with much interest, and fixed his eyes intently upon the stranger. As he raised his head from the table where he had been playing, and turned calmly to leave it, his eyes met those of Sir Robert, and both started as though some strange recollection came suddenly over them, some vivid memory of the past. At first the gambler seemed as if he desired to avoid a further recognition or acquaintance, but as Sir Robert still fixed his eyes upon him earnestly, he appeared to think it best to appear unconcerned, and with the same air of coolness which had characterized his movements at the table, even approached him still nearer.

"We have met before," said Sir Robert, after a moment's pause, "or my memory serves me poorly."

"Perhaps so," replied the singular personage who had created so much interest for the time being. "Let us walk into the air, if you are not engaged. I am somewhat heated with this game and the close room."

CHAPTER XXXII.

AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

——The times have been
That when the brains were out, the man would die,
And there an end—but now they rise again. MACBETH.

SIR ROBERT and the stranger passed from brilliantly lighted saloon where the scene we have described had just taken place, into the little court before the house, and paused beneath the street lamp that was posted by one of the pillars of the gate leading into the enclosure. The gambler wiped the perspiration from his forehead, and seemed to obtain singular relief from the change of atmosphere that he now realized. They stood there for a moment in silence, Sir Robert gazing upon the countenance of his companion with an earnest look, and striving to recall the place where he had met that countenance before. But it was all in vain, he was completely puzzled, until at last, when some moments had expired and the gambler had apparently once more quite recovered himself from the excitement which he must necessarily have felt, notwithstanding the outward calmness which he had evinced and which had created so much surprise among those who witnessed his game, Sir Robert said:

"Can you tell me, sir, when we have met before, and where?"

"It is a little singular that you should have forgotten me," said the gambler, musing, "though many years have passed since we met. I know that I have altered much, but I knew you in a moment."

"Indeed?"

"Yes."

"The name and locality I have forgotten, but not the face; that lives fresh in my memory," said Sir Robert.

"You have good reason to remember it, I should think," said the gambler, smiling with a deep meaning.

"Many years, you say, have passed," continued Sir Robert; "perhaps it was in India that we met."

"You cannot remember?"

"No."

"It was not in India," said the gambler, "but in the valley of the Rhine."

"The Rhine, the Rhine," said Sir Robert, repeating the words rapidly, as though with them all the train of thought which he had sought came back to him. "The valley of the Rhine, say you?"

"Ah! you remember me now," said the gambler, smiling with a sarcastic expression as he gazed upon Sir Robert.

"You were the traveller that I met at the inn of Mornentz," said Sir Robert, gazing at him with interest.

"Or rather the robber chief," said the other, bending his wrinkled face upon Sir Robert as he spoke. "We know each other now, why disguise it? I am Karl Blasius, the robber."

"But I have seen you since then."

"Impossible."

"It is true."

"Where?"

"Have you not a wound upon your left wrist—a sword cut?"

"Yes, what of that?"

"If I tell you where you received it, will you not believe that we have met since we parted at the cave?"

"I will," said the robber, with interest. "Where was it?"

"In the West Indies."

"Well."

"On board a sloop manned by Englishmen," said Sir Robert.

"True."

"And the man who wounded you was a strong person, who threw you into the sea."

"Ha! I see you know all," said the gambler; "and his name, who was he?"

"He stands before you," said Sir Robert, calmly. "I could not recall your face at that exciting moment, though I knew that we had met before, and you too paused; do you remember?"

"The succeeding casualty drove all from my mind, though methinks that after I was picked up by the crew of the vessel in which I sailed, I did seem to recall a face that appeared familiar to me."

"But the world thought you were dead," said Sir Robert, "that you perished in the attempt at escape."

"They were wholly wrong," said the gambler; "my time had not yet come. The hatred I owed the world has been still more deeply satiated, and I have been daily more and more revenged, as you may well suppose, knowing what you know. But did I not hear some one address you in the saloon as Sir Robert Brompton?"

"That is my name."

"Then you travelled incog when you were in the valley of the Rhine."

"O, no," said Sir Robert, "bore my true name at that time."

"How am I to understand you then?" asked the other, with interest.

"It is easily explained."

"I knew you as Robert Stanley," said the gambler, "and thus your letters introduced you to the leading families of Bronts. No one should know their import better than for reasons that you will not have readily forgotten."

"I had my own name, for Stanley is still attached to it. At my father's death I took his, with the addition, and was then knighted by the king. So you see I was not incog, after all."

It was most singular that they should have met thus, and the strange dark man before him gazed upon the ground for some minutes in silence, during which he seemed to be recalling the picture of the past, and a part of its scenes too that moved him much, as his expressive face evinced. He said:

"You married the fair lady Gustine, Sir Robert Brompton, of course, and brought her with you to England?"

"Yes."

"She is dead these many years," said the ex-robber, hoarsely. "That I have long since been informed of."

"It is nearly twelve years since she died," said Sir Robert, calmly.

"Is it so long as that?" murmured the strange man, thoughtfully.

"It is just twelve years, this very month, since her death."

"Then, sir," continued the other, with a manner and tone that carried conviction with it as to the speaker's honesty, "there can be no harm nor indelicacy on my part in telling you how much I loved that lady."

"Can that be possible? How could you really have loved her, and yet have deceived her as you did, and have played the false hearted game that you did in imprisoning her?"

"The false-hearted game that I played, was only false so far as I deceived her in relation to my name. I went to her father's roof to win by stratagem one through whom I might disgrace him, and a score of noble families besides, in the valley where we lived.—But, alas! I lost my heart at the outset, and wooed and loved her from the time of our first meeting, with my very soul. The lady knew this—I told her all before I parted from her, previous to that escape which you conducted so cunningly. My regard was most honest, and Heaven bears me witness that lady Gustine might have entirely reformed me, and made me what she pleased. My whole soul was wrapped up in her, and I loved her,

sir, as few men can love. It was my utter undoing that ever we met, for since that time I have never been the man I was before.—Sometimes I have fancied that I saw her before me, as a spirit, and then I have been little better than crazed, and when I think long of her, I believe I am really so."

"You have changed much since I knew you on the Rhine," said Sir Robert.

"Have I?" asked the gambler, abstractedly, seemingly lost in reverie.

"Much, very much," said Sir Robert.

Sir Robert could not but pity the being he saw before him, so different from the manly and noble looking individual whom he had known under such peculiar circumstances.—His brow was wrinkled now, and in the deep stern lines might be read the record of many hardships, and yet his still handsome face was marked with intellect and expression. There was a slight sprinkling of gray too in his dark hair, and his figure, which had once been a model in its form, was now a little rounded at the shoulders, and inclining forward. Sir Robert could see that he had mingled, since they had met, with trouble, dissipation and debauchery of all kinds, and that the hand of time already lay heavily upon him. As he made these observations, the broken-down man still mused to himself, apparently forgetting all about him.

"You had a singular run of luck to-night," said Sir Robert, attempting to arouse his companion.

"Where?"

"At the bank."

"At the bank," said the gambler, starting; "O, yes, and was perhaps a fool not to walk away with the proceeds, instead of waiting there to lose them; but I never can do that—a devil within me always presses me on.—But I care not for the loss; it affords me what I so much desire—excitement. I am lucky though, with my chances, and this is not a new thing with me. I have broken a bank before this, and loaned it money to win all back again from me."

After a few minutes of pause between them, the ex-robber seemed to remember himself.

"Fortune has thrown us most singularly together once more," said he, "but perhaps we may never meet again; and yet we *may* meet when you least expect it, and least desire it. But on my own part, of course, self-preservation teaches me that I must preserve my incognita. So, Sir Robert Brompton, I bid you a hasty farewell."

Thus saying, the ex-robber turned suddenly away, and disappeared down a narrow and dark by-street, leaving his companion standing by himself, quite dumb with the surprise that the few previous moments had caused.—It was a strange meeting, and under most singular circumstances; no wonder that Sir Robert mused so thoughtfully for some time.

A gay, half-intoxicated party passing out of the gaming house, started him at length from his forgetfulness of the present. Some of the passers knew him and addressed him familiarly, desiring him to join them in some proposed plan of amusement.

"Excuse me," said he, "I am already engaged. Another time perhaps—"

"No excuses, my old cove," cried a young fop, half-intoxicated; "come you must, or egad we'll force you."

Sir Robert only pushed the speaker aside, as he would have removed a dog from his path, and after a moment's pause to collect his thoughts relating to the singular events that had just occurred, turned his steps slowly homeward.

As he walked on thus by himself, his mind reverted with a keen retrospective glance to the past, and he reviewed those vivid scenes of his life which had transpired nearly a score of years gone by, and which the ex-robber and gambler had once more so vividly recalled. It was all once more pictured before his mind's eye, from his meeting with the unknown traveller at the little inn of Mornentz, of their path through that lone and mysterious forest, and of his long imprisonment in the robber's cave. He then reviewed the details of the deception that Karl Blasius had played upon him, and of his stratagem with the lady Gustine, of her imprisonment and the release which he himself effected, of that startling adventure with her in the forest, even to the irresistible desire that crept over him to sleep as he watched, and the killing of the wolf. How keenly he recollected each circumstance now, after so many years had elapsed! Then of their safe arrival at last at her father's castle, and the cordial friendship that ensued, and which rip-

ened into love, and finally resulted in their union.

And as he still pursued his way, Sir Robert went on with his contemplation of the past, and from step to step he came to review his connection with his wife, recalling the feelings of jealousy that had at times wrung his very heart. Some of the scenes that he thus reviewed in his panoramic glance of the past, must have been vivid and have troubled him much, for his very step evinced a nervous irritation, and a dark cloud seemed hanging over his brow and shadowing his very heart. He turned neither to the right nor the left, but pressed forward steadily on his way towards his home. So intense were his meditations, that a boisterous criminal struggling past him in the hands of the police did not arouse him at all. Ah! Sir Robert, yours had been a chequered life, and it was the one dark spot that you contemplated now; a portion that as yet we have found no place to name, but which the plot of our story must ere long reveal.

Though Sir Robert Brompton was melancholy and troubled in thought, how quickly were these ills dispelled on his entering his own house, when a soft inquiry from Edith cast a ray of sunshine over his brow, and her loving glances and tender caresses acted like balm upon his wounded and fretful spirit.—Her words were so delicate and well-timed, her sympathy so abundant without being inquisitive, and her love so truthful and overflowing, that she could have shared the keenest grief. Even the most casual observer would have marked how Sir Robert doted upon the lovely girl, and though his lips did not frequently lavish praise upon her, yet his eyes betrayed how closely the gentle being before him had bound herself about his heart.—He had no time for sorrow and regret in her presence; all was gladness and joy while she was by his side.

And no one would have wondered at this, who had seen her there watching him so tenderly, ever thoughtful of his presence, and ever striving first of all to please him, and then to render herself agreeable to others. Sir Robert saw and marked this well, for his eyes were constantly upon her, and he noticed her simplest movements. Nor was it a matter of surprise that she should have gained such influence over him; a heart of stone must have been instinctively drawn towards so sweet a being. Thus besieged by her child-like love and devotion, adamant itself must have yielded to such an irresistible current of affection. And how natural it all was on Edith's part, how natural and honest in every prompting! There was so much to draw out her love from the still remote depths of the heart, for every one and everything in that princely establishment seemed devoted to her will and service. And then Sir Robert had rescued her from a situation to which she could not refer even in memory, without a blanched cheek and a shuddering frame. He was the first human being who had ever been really kind to her that she could remember, and the only one whom she felt that she might love with all the tenderness of her affection.

O, it was a most joyous thing for that young heart to find an idol for its fondest affection, so capable was it of love, and so dormant and neglected had its sweet fountain of dear homage been until now. But once undammed and its current permitted to flow freely with all its native impulse, a never-dying spring seemed at once to burst forth, finding its rise in her very soul, while the supply appeared only to increase by the quantity that was lavished. She loved Sir Robert, she loved Mrs. Marlow—dear woman, how kind hearted and considerate she was—and then she loved Walter and even the servants who were so good to her. Indeed, Edith's life had come to be one fountain of affection, and her heart a tablet of love.

Thus it was between the gentle Edith and Sir Robert Brompton, at this period of our story, and no wonder with such a gentle, captivating home influence as we have referred to, the cloud should have left his brow so quickly after the exciting scene at the gaming house, when he once more became seated in his own chair.

But where was Clara all this while, the dear, well beloved companion of Edith during her exile, and her adopted sister in this her new home? If the author was inclined to forget her, we feel confident that the reader would not be. She too was there, as loving and charming as ever, casting about her at all times smiles and jests, so happy and gladsome, that she seemed to be a stray spirit from the

realms of Momus. She was the life of all around her, and kept each one in bursts of broad humor by the very heartiness with which she enjoyed and keenly appreciated the ever occurring points of wit, no less refined and delicate than keen and pungent. We do not mean to insinuate that Clara played the part of a punster. It was not so much what she said that kept those about her in such good humor, as it was the light of her laughing eye and the natural flow of spirits that constantly emanated from her lips.

"Clara, how can you be always so cheerful and merry?" asked Edith.

"O, one may as well laugh as be sad, Edith," she answered, pleasantly.

"That may be true, but I cannot always feel like laughing."

"Feel like it, Edith?"

"Yes. Sometimes I am sad at heart without knowing why."

"Do you think when I am merry that I am always happy, Edith?"

"Why not, Clara?"

"Why not?"

"When people smile, Clara, we think it the reflection of inward joy."

"Ah, but Edith, I am often saddest when I seem to be the most merry. But that is of no consequence. Why should I make others sad by forcing upon them my own troubles?"

"True, Clara. I never thought of that; how stupid I must sometimes appear."

"No, no, I did not mean that, Edith. You misunderstand me. You are far more truthful than I am, for if you feel sad you look so, and if you are happy your face shows it as well."

"But after all, Clara, we have great cause for thankfulness, and should be very happy, situated as we are. Don't you think so?"

"Sometimes I do, and then again—but this is not often—I think perhaps if I had remained in the station where I was born, perhaps I should be happier."

"How is it possible that you can feel thus, Clara?"

"Only by comparison."

"How do you mean?"

"Why, I knew nothing of the *heart-ache*, Edith, until refinement, and the high associations that have encircled us here, opened my eyes."

"Do you mean to say, Clara, that you would be happier to return to your old habits, and those from whom you escaped?"

"By no means; now I behold those associations in the most despicable light, because I have experienced the contrast; but yet I have sometimes doubted whether I should not have been happier not to have known this prosperity, and never to have shared the cultivation that we have received here."

"Yours is a queer philosophy, Clara; but I will not argue with you about it. We must strive to be happy, though if I were to tell any one that you were unhappy, I should be laughed at, for you are set down for a pattern of merriment."

"Few persons look beneath the surface, Edith, but, on the contrary, they flatter themselves that they read character at a glance, as they would examine an article of dress you might wear."

"There is dear Sir Robert—I must go to him at once."

Clara loved Sir Robert, but not as Edith loved him; first she loved him because he was so good and kind to Edith, whom Clara set down in her young heart as the best creature living, and whom she really loved better than any one else. Then she regarded him as her benefactor, and for this her affectionate heart teemed with gratitude to him; but the very fact that she sought for reasons to love Sir Robert, was an evidence in itself that she did not love him as Edith did, whose every faculty seemed to merge into this one affection, and without a thought as to the cause, yielded its purest and most undivided wealth of fondness at the feet of its idol.

Such was the character of the regard that each of the girls bore Sir Robert.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

FIRST LESSON IN LOVE.

Cassius.—Brutus, I do observe you now of late:
I have not from your eyes that gentleness
And show of love as I was wont to have. JULIUS CÆSAR.

LORD AMIDOWN, of whom we have already spoken, was the son of an earl, and the representative of one of the proudest lines of the English aristocracy. Besides which this was a period when the sacredness of birth and blood was most strenuously enforced, a period when, comparatively speaking, there were but two classes, the high and the low. Young Lord Amidown was at that age when the heart is most impressible, and when one feels oneself enslaved at once by every pair of blue eyes that chances to look kindly upon him. As to his experience, he was but lately free from the hands of the learned professors of Oxford, and had only made a hurried tour of the United Kingdoms, and a short one of the Continent, tarrying for half a year at Paris, just long enough to fill his head with romance, and his brain with the most exaggerated ideas of the beautiful in nature and art. But he was of a generous and noble spirit, nevertheless.

Unlike most young men of his class and birth in society, the position to which he was born had not spoiled him, and spite of the homage that was paid to wealth and blood, he was little moved by the respect that a thousand hangers-on upon the skirts of fashionable life were ever ready to render him. Though somewhat above Sir Robert in the matter of position, yet the princely wealth of the latter and his father's position during life, as well as that of his ancestors for centuries past, removed all barriers on the point of aristocratic etiquette. Moreover, he belonged to the same club as Sir Robert, and it was there that they first became acquainted with each other. A cordial invitation to his house had been responded to by his lordship, who there met Edith and Clara and formed their acquaintance with evident delight.

Being strongly impressed by the beauty of both the adopted children of Sir Robert, and more particularly with the soft and winning loveliness of Edith, he was a devoted friend at once. Lord Amidown showed his own taste and appreciation in his choice of Edith, and also that it was a discriminating choice, for ninety-nine in a hundred at first sight would have been pleased with the undeniable attractions of Clara, so lively, yet so modest and handsome. It required a mind not unlike her own, to fully appreciate the true and delicate beauty that lay half hidden beneath the scarcely less lovely exterior of Edith.

Before he had once thought of analyzing the purposes of his doing so, Lord Amidown found himself drawn to the house of Sir Robert Brompton with a frequency and regularity that began to cause not a little remark among his friends at the club. Besides which, it served as a theme for gossip among the blue stockings, whose peculiar province it was to preside over the actions and motives of their neighbors—a class, thank heaven, that is gradually fading away from the better circles of society. Though this gossip and the more licensed raillery of his companions annoyed him perhaps in some degree, yet it did not deter him in the least from the regular continuance of his visits.

Yet these jeers and reflections did have one important effect, and doubtless a beneficial one upon himself; it led him to analyze his own feelings carefully, and to ask himself what it was indeed that drew him hither?"

One serious glance at his heart and its secret promptings while in this mood, served to show him that he was undeniably in love. It awoke him to the full consciousness that he was deeply and truly in love with the gentle Edith. Six months of delightful intercourse had shown him the depth and richness of her pure and gentle soul, and he felt that it was not without its chastening influence upon himself. The rough and passion fostering society of his former companions had now suddenly lost its charm, a desire for the wild stimulus of dissipation was usurped by a fascination almost too potent, attracting him to the society of purity and beauty. If in a thoughtless moment a hasty word escaped him of passion, or a half formed oath rose to his lips among his friends at the club, he thought of Edith, and the expletive died upon his tongue.

In short Lord Amidown was most irrevocably in love.

"Amidown, we are going to Ascot to-morrow, and shall have a fine time. You will go with us of course, wont you?" asked a young friend who met him in his usual daily call at the club.

"I can't go, as I have an engagement," said his lordship.

"*Engagement*," said the other, emphasizing the word, and looking very knowing at his friend as he did so.

"Is there anything very remarkable in the fact that a gentleman happens to have an engagement?" asked Lord Amidown.

"O no," said his friend, laughing.

"Well, then, why do you seem to wonder at my engagements?" he asked.

"There is nothing to be wondered at, your lordship; on the contrary, I should suppose an *engagement* would be the natural result of your present mode of passing time."

"You are a mad wag, George," said his lordship, good naturedly, and trying to laugh off the affair.

"Sorry for you, Amidown, very sorry indeed," continued his friend, with mock seriousness.

"Fudge, George. Who goes down with your party to-morrow to the race?"

"Baulking your leap, old fellow, eh—don't like the look of the ground," said the other.

"Can't you leave off raillery for one single moment, George?"

"With all my heart, but—"

"Don't have any buts about it."

"Now seriously, Amidown," said his friend, "are you going to throw yourself away at your time of life? Why, my dear fellow, you haven't sowed your wild oats yet; just think of your age, and what a chance lies before you."

"Nonsense, nonsense. Choose some other theme for your fun, George," said Lord Amidown, a little annoyed.

"It may be fun to you now, but look out for breakers ahead, Amidown; believe me, no man should attempt to join wits with a woman until he has had at least thirty good years experience of this world, in general, and of women in particular. Why, man, you are scarcely twenty-two, what have you to do with marriage?"

"Did I say that I was about to marry?" asked his lordship, almost in despair at his friend's earnestness.

"No, but all the club say so, and every body believes it to be true,

> 'But where a lady's in the case,
> You see all other things give place,'

continued his merry companion, laughing heartily.

"Here, George," said his lordship, handing him a couple of guineas, "be so good as to get me a ticket in your party to Ascot, and if

I don't come in time, fill my place with a good fellow, and give him my ticket."

"That's equivalent to saying you wont go," said his friend.

"No, George, I didn't say that."

"Ah! I see how it is, Amidown—you are shot right through the heart."

Lord Amidown felt no inclination for amusement, but on the contrary was not a little puzzled and uncomfortable as it regarded matters at Sir Robert Brompton's house. In reviewing his own position as connected with the family, his lordship found matters in a complicated shape. Walter Manning seemed by common acceptation to be really engaged to Edith, and yet to his lordship's discriminating eye, he seemed to be far more devoted at heart and engaged by Clara's brilliant and captivating fascinations. He could not fail to discover that Sir Robert favored the idea of a future union between Walter and Edith, and that if his own visits were not so understood in reality, yet it was evidently the fact that Sir Robert wished to understand them as relating to Clara. The fact is, like children, we are apt to believe what we hope, and so Sir Robert was deceived.

With Edith herself, Lord Amidown thought he was better understood, though he had never uttered the first syllable that he might not have said with the utmost propriety to any other lady, yet he believed that in the interchange of feelings and sentiment which they so often enjoyed together, and by the wonderfully silent, yet eloquent language of the eyes, he must have often betrayed to her the feelings that prompted every sentiment of his heart. He consoled himself, we say, with this idea; but then even this was all conjecture, for Edith was so kind and gentle to all, so unaffected and frank in her manner, so delicately earnest as well with Sir Robert, Walter, or himself, that he could not interpret from her actions even one single ray of hope, that might lead him to the conviction that she he loved so dearly, favored him above any other.

There was an unhappy shade sometimes visible on Edith's face, a soft tinge of sadness, that seemed to say that all was not right within her gentle bosom, that there was some secret cause for unhappiness within her heart, and it was this gentle, half-discovered melancholy that threw, in no small degree, such a lovely mystery about her, while it formed no trifling contrast to Clara's apparently unclouded and happy spirits. And yet the keen observer might have read sorrow too, at times, but scantily hidden beneath the laughing exterior and merry eye of Clara herself. But let time develop the story of her heart.

"Edith, who gave you that beautiful bouquet?" asked Clara, one night as the two girls had thrown themselves listlessly upon the soft couches of their chamber, before retiring to sleep.

"Lord Amidown," answered Edith, frankly. "It is a beautiful bouquet—these flowers are so rare."

"A man of taste is that Lord Amidown," said Clara, "but not exactly after my taste, however."

"Why so? Pray what is the matter with Lord Amidown?"

"O, he's too sombre by half, and should take orders in the church."

"Sombre?"

"Yes, melancholy and thoughtful; half the time dreaming."

"Why I think him very agreeable, Clara. He surely is not over melancholy, as far as I can see."

"Then you do not see with my eyes, that is all, Edith."

"Perhaps not," she answered, thoughtfully.

"Now what think you, Edith," continued her companion, "of Walter as compared with his lordship, position aside, for we both know very well that the one is a lord and the other a simple commoner?"

"What a queer question to ask, Clara. I could not draw a comparison between them. I have known Walter so much longer, that I might be prejudiced in his favor on that account."

"Now, Edith," said Clara, half rising and speaking earnestly, "I wouldn't give one of Walter Manning's good hearty laughs for a dozen of Lord Amidown's soft sighs and polished speeches."

"Walter *is* very cheerful and convivial," said Edith, pleasantly; "but I think Lord Amidown is also very agreeable. Perhaps he is less earnest and boisterous than Walter."

"Ah, Edith, Edith," said Clara, shaking

her finger playfully at her companion, "you see with queer eyes, but I suppose you cannot help it; his lordship has been bribing you with soft speeches, I fear."

"Soft speeches?"

"Ay, and tender glances."

"O, no, Clara," said her companion, honestly, "Lord Amidown has never said that to me which he might not have said before Walter, yourself, or any one. No, Clara, you are wrong."

"Walter tells me that they write all their love letters in the East by means of flowers," said Clara. "Let me see your bouquet; now here are buds in any quantity, what does that mean? here are violets and a backing of heather grass."

"It is so fragrant, too," said Edith, handing it to Clara's extended hand.

And as Clara went on cheerfully and thoughtlessly analyzing the flowers, she gradually tore the bouquet to pieces, leaving not two stems together. Though Edith observed this with regret, yet she said not a word to her companion, who she knew would not intentionally displease her.

As time passed on, and the two lovely girls approached more nearly the confines of womanhood, new and attractive friends were formed, from among the best society, and they began to move in a more extended circle—imparting constantly to their manner, polish and improvement. Sir Robert seemed well pleased at all this, and his means and time were freely expended to render his house the gay and cheerful resort that he wished, for Edith's sake more particularly, to make it. His house was therefore the very home of hospitality.

Sir Robert Brompton felt no slight regard and even love for Clara; this every one saw who noted their daily intercourse, but the good Mrs. Marlow, who was a keen observer, and who also understood the human heart far better than even her master, said that Sir Robert loved Clara principally because she looked so much like Edith, and because Edith herself loved her so dearly. But still the housekeeper, in the goodness and largeness of her kind heart, found out a hundred reasons herself for loving Clara, and declared unhesitatingly that next to Edith, she was the sweetest young lady in all of London, and truth to say, Mrs. Marlow was very nearly right in this supposition, as she was in most everything else.

Both Edith and Clara appealed to her as to the propriety of every action, and respected her advice as much as though it had been supported by the most profound and unquestioned authority.

It was a matter of no small importance to these young and inexperienced girls, situated under such peculiar circumstances as those in which they found themselves, that they met with so good a friend in Mrs. Marlow, who was one of those strong-minded, yet most devoted and affectionate souls that one often finds among her class of the community. Single-minded, quiet, attentive, and ever desirous to please; yet she was no cringer, and if Sir Robert in his simplicity proposed aught for the young ladies that Mrs. Marlow, in her better experience of the sex, considered improper, or not exactly lady-like, she told Sir Robert so at once, and he in fact respected her the more for it, and as to the girls themselves, she seemed to them little less than a kind mother. It would have been a very difficult matter for them to appear so well, had this been otherwise; it was all-important to them in their new sphere of action. Edith told Mrs. Marlow that she could love her no better were she indeed her mother, while Clara felt as much, though she said it not; indeed it was not her way to give open expression to her feelings; she seemed to be equally animated by them with Edith, but they rarely found utterance from her lips.

Some months subsequent to the evening scene which we have described as occurring between Edith and Clara, Lord Amidown fancied that he discovered in Edith a disposition to avoid him when she could do so without its being manifestly her purpose. He fancied that his advances were received less cordially, and indeed that he was, as far as she was concerned, a less welcome visiter than he had deemed himself heretofore. Sorely annoyed at this state of affairs, his lordship was much puzzled to discover any cause for it. He reviewed his every word, and strove to recall at what precise time this evidence of her feelings first showed itself.

Naturally of a diffident temperament, Lord Amidown longed in secret to speak to Edith upon this subject, but did not find himself

possessed of the requisite courage. This was a strong and truthful evidence of the sincerity of his love. He would have thought nothing of appearing before the queen at court, and of receiving with easy self-possession the respect that was his due—but before this simple and lovely girl, his manhood quailed; he did not dare to speak to her upon the theme nearest to his heart. He had hedged her about in his love so like a sacred divinity, that he dared not himself overstep the barriers constructed by his own love.

With his true and constant heart thus racked with fear and the misery of suspense, he resolved to write to Edith that which he felt he lacked the courage to say to her in person, and in accordance with this resolve, one evening as he left her, he bade her good night with more than usual tenderness, and as they parted, laid a note to her address in her hand.

Edith blushed, and said nothing, but the moment that he was fairly gone, she sought her chamber at once, and throwing herself carelessly upon a couch, covered her face with her hands, and wept. O, how bitterly, how sadly she wept there alone. She did not open the note immediately, but wept thus for minutes; then drying her eyes, she said to herself:

"What need is there that I should read this note? How well I know its purport already. Could two hearts like ours mingle so long together and not fully understand each other? It is impossible; and yet to realize the barrier that separates us, a barrier so fearful that I shudder when I remember how far it removes me from him! True, I am dear Sir Robert's adopted child, true, he has said that a queenly dower shall go with my hand, but O, what of that? am I not lowly, maybe ignobly born, and when his lordship knows this, will he still love me? I feel, alas! I know it cannot be. His birth is so immeasurably above mine, that I tremble to know the distance between us. How have I been so blind as to thus live on in intimacy with him, knowing all this, while he knows nothing of it. It is a fearful thought, my very life has been a lie this many a day. I have sat and smiled upon him, have enjoyed his fascinating society, have responded to his sentiments, day after day, and all this time, too delicate and considerate to be inquisitive, he has believed me the daughter of humble but respectable parents, the orphan child of Sir Robert's friend. Alas, alas, would that we had never met. I thought I was happy when Sir Robert received me, and with his dear love and that of good Mrs. Marlow, my world of joy seemed to be complete; but now, O, how my very heart aches.!"

She paused, and with her eyes upon the floor and her bosom heaving quickly, presented the very picture of grief and despair. At last, as if remembering herself, she "broke the neck of the wax," and read the contents of the note as follows:

"DEAR LADY:

"These few days past I have observed a seeming desire on your part to avoid my society, and while I take the liberty to express the hope that I have not incurred your displeasure by any remark or course of action, permit me also to refer to a subject very near and dear to my heart, and one which has engaged all my hopes and thoughts for many a day. Since our first meeting, I have felt that I loved you most dearly, but if this was the sentiment that actuated me so early in our acquaintance, how much deeper must that affection have taken root after more than a year of happy intercourse, in which the entire wealth of your mind and soul have been laid open to my admiration nearly every day, so intimate have we been.

"I have never told you in words, Edith, that I loved you, but, ah, have you not read it a hundred times in my eyes, my voice, my every action? These indications have been spontaneous and beyond my control, the promptings of a heart that is solely and constantly yours. And now am I loved in return? Ah! Edith, on the answer of this little query, I feel that all my future happiness in life depends. I write this in all calmness—do not think me rash or impetuous. I am neither. I know that your tender age would debar a union at present, nor should I have even hinted at such a subject, but for the circumstance referred to in the first part of this note. Your age, dearest, need be no bar to the union of our hearts, we may be pledged to each other, Edith, and only be the happier. Your choice would be mine as to time.

"But alas! my pen has quite run away with me, and I write as though I were sure of success in my suit, but I know you will receive these few lines as they are intended, dearest. If they seem to be abrupt, think how very unhappy I am at your coolness towards me of late, and send me one line to say I am forgiven, if no more.

"Devotedly yours,

"AMIDOWN."

Edith's eyes were clear and bright as she raised them from the paper, after reading this. She had thoroughly relieved her aching heart before she opened the note, by a flood of tears, and now she considered its import with calmness and cool judgment, though her heart beat more rapidly, and a heightened color nestled in her soft cheek. She mused thoughtfully for some moments. At first she thought it would be proper for her to show this note to her adopted parent, Sir Robert, but here was a struggle, for delicacy forbade her to do so. Yet she knew not how to act in this singular situation. She felt that Mrs. Marlow was not a proper person for her to go to in such a dilemma, and also that Clara's kind heart would fail to be of any service to her here. She even thought of going to Walter, and seriously, too, as she would have gone to a brother, but a certain feeling kept her in check on this point.

In this dilemma she sat and picked the mottoed seal of the note to pieces, until at last the poor girl, with an aching heart, resolved to follow the dictates of her own judgment in this dilemma. She trusted to the first promptings of her feelings, and sitting down to her writing desk, indited the following reply to Lord Amidown's epistle:

"MY LORD:

"I have just read your esteemed favor. To pretend that I do not fully understand it, would be to deceive you. While it has given me pleasure to know that I share your lordship's warm friendship, it has also pained me to realize that you have referred to any more tender relationship between us. It is a subject upon which to multiply words, would be to harrow up feelings on my part, that I must strive to suppress. Permit me to assure you that it will be my pride ever to consider you as a very dear friend, but I pray you, my lord, do not misunderstand me when I add that a nearer relationship can never exist between us. So far from your lordship's having ever offended or annoyed me at any time, which you seem to imagine, I can only say that the happiest moments of my life have been passed in your society, nor have you ever by word or deed, dispelled the high esteem and respect that we have all entertained for you.

"It were better, my lord, that this note should seal up the subject forever.

"Respectfully and truly your friend,

"EDITH."

When she had done this, she re-read her note, then folded and sealed it, after which she sunk back into her seat upon the couch, and sighed heavily, as though she had signed her own death warrant. It was a decided, but most generous and self-sacrificing resolve that had dictated this answer which the fair young girl had written, for under the profuse and splendid patronage of Sir Robert, she might, had she felt thus disposed, have obliterated all record of the past as it related to her humble, and indeed degrading associations of the past. How easy it would have been to invent a story in accordance with that already believed by his lordship, touching the matter of her humble but respectable parentage and adoption by Sir Robert. But the pure and gentle heart of Edith was not capable of deceit; she would not have entertained such an idea even for a single moment.

How dearly and tenderly she had learned to regard Lord Amidown, with a love so deep that it had already become a part of her very existence. To her he seemed all that was noble and good, and though Lord Amidown was entirely hers as it regarded his heart, yet it may be doubted if he loved her as well as she loved him. As to the matter of his sincerity and truthfulness of purpose, however, and his strict notions of honor, he was indeed worthy of Edith. That which he had written in his note to her was as true as her own fond regard for him, a love that deserved the richest return and interest that her heart might give. All this she realized, and thought upon with even redoubled force at this moment.

Edith at last aroused herself from the sad thoughts that oppressed her, and prepared herself for rest, and kneeling by her bedside, with her hands clasped upon her breast and her eyes uplifted to the throne of him who is the Father of the orphan, her lips moved in prayer for him she loved. Her long hair hung fondly about her heaving breast and dimpled shoulders, and a diamond drop fresh from the soul, trembled in her eye!

As she knelt there, the door was gently opened, but in her earnestness she heeded it not, and as she went on with her prayer, Clara drew behind one of the curtains, and remained in silence until Edith arose from her kneeling posture. Clara gazed at her during the few moments that transpired with an expressive face, warmly sympathizing with her, and even weeping silently by herself as she seemed to understand Edith's position in relation to Lord Amidown. She loved her, too, most sincerely, and it gave her no slight pain to see her unhappy in any matter, but probably there were reasons why she sympathized more particularly with her at this moment, as the story will explain.

Who would not have loved her to see her thus pleading for him she loved, presenting a figure so pure and beautiful, that she looked more like an ethereal being, dropped from above, than like a mortal.

"How beautiful is sorrow when 'tis drest
By virgin innocence! It makes
Felicity in others seem deformed."

Poor Edith, how inexperienced thou art, and this is thy first lesson in the varied wiles of the heart.

When Edith had ended her prayer, Clara pretended to have just come in, that she might not embarrass her, and kissing her tenderly, she said:

"Are you not well to-night, Edith? can I do anything for you?"

"O, no, thank you, Clara dear. I am not ill."

"Do you not remember the lesson you read me but a little while since about being unhappy, and now I find you in tears?"

"They are foolish, Clara, I confess, but they will sometimes flow."

"I will not ask the cause, Edith," said Clara, "but when it is in my power to console you, as you love me, let me do it."

"I will, I will, Clara. You are always so good, so kind and thoughtful with me, that I owe you much thankfulness," said Edith, throwing her arms about her neck.

Thus the two evinced the honest feelings that prompted them in relation to each other, and now as the reader has seen Edith's most secret thoughts, we have another heart to unmask.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A HEART UNMASKED.

Come, the plot thickens, and another fold
Of the warm cloak of mystery wraps us round.
* * * * *
And for their loves,
Behold, the seal is on them! BANNER OF TYBURN.

OF COURSE Walter Manning was not an unobservant witness, day by day and week by week, of the intimacy of Lord Amidown and Edith. Indeed it was noticed by all in the house. There was a time when such a state of things would have caused him the most unmitigated distress and misery, but somehow, all unconsciously to him, Clara had gradually usurped in his heart the place that Edith had filled there. Not that Walter was blind to her remarkable attractions and sweet loveliness of person and disposition; indeed he was the first to pay truthful homage to them, and even now fully realized and spoke of her attractions to Clara with an earnestness that gave token of his sincerity. It was not that he lacked the power of appreciation, that "a change had come o'er the spirit of his dream," but the truth was, Clara's liveliness and vivacity were more in accordance with his feelings, and then, too, she was nearly as handsome, at least in his eyes, as Edith herself. In fact their resemblance to each other was so remarkable as to be the cause of frequent allusion by those who were strangers to them, and save those differences of disposition which we have noted, they also much resembled each other in tastes and general characteristics.

Clara and Walter were sitting together on the day subsequent to the date of the letters which we have given in the last chapter. They were *en famille* in a retired part of the reception room, when Walter asked:

"What is it that has troubled Edith to-day? She has seemed melancholy and dejected all day, I think."

"Perhaps she is not well," replied Clara, carelessly turning the leaves of a book that she held.

"If she is ill, Clara," said Walter, "it is mentally. I am confident of that—it is the mind, not the body."

"Do you really think so?" said Clara, with an earnestness that Walter could not but observe.

"I do, most assuredly."

"Well, there can be no harm surely in my being frank with you, Walter," she continued, speaking low that Sir Robert, who was reading the Gazette in an opposite corner, might not hear. "I know that something does trouble her mind."

"Indeed, and do you know the cause of this, Clara, or does she make it a secret even between you?"

"In all her affairs save this one, she has always spoken freely to me and confided in me," she replied.

"This, what do you mean?"

"Speak low, Walter. I mean her intimacy

with Lord Amtdown, and her feelings towards him."

"What possible trouble can there be in relation to that matter? She seems ever happy in his society, and it is very evident that Amidown himself regards her with the tenderest interest."

"All that is very true."

"Then pray what trouble or misunderstanding can there be between them to cause her to feel unhappy?"

"Can you see no possible cause for trouble, Walter?" asked his companion in a tone of voice so much more serious than it was her wont to speak in, that he seemed surprised as he answered:

"None."

"Then you do not see with my eyes, and my experience," said the fair girl, sighing heavily as she spoke.

"How did you discover that this was the cause of her dejection?" asked Walter, after a moment's pause.

"By mere chance, last night."

"And how, Clara?"

"I will tell you, Walter, though I could not do so to any one else, for you seem to me as though you were her brother, and I know you feel like one towards her."

"I do indeed," replied Walter, earnestly.

"Last night," continued Clara, "as I went to my room to retire, I opened the door gently lest I should awake her from sleep, for she had retired some time before me. I discovered her upon her knees, engaged in a pure and earnest prayer for him whom you know to be so devotedly attached to her. I hesitated at first as to what I should do. I had gently closed the door after me, and I feared if I should open it again that I should disturb her and interrupt her prayer. I this dilemma, I shrank back behind the hangings of my bedstead, where I waited the closing of her prayer, when I pretended to have just come in at the door, which I opened and closed again. But I heard enough while I was there to show me that his lordship had proposed to Edith, and also that the note which lay upon her desk addressed to him, contained her refusal of his hand."

"Refusal!"

"Yes."

"Edith refuse Lord Amidown?"

"Yes, the letter which I saw lying upon the desk, unquestionably contained her refusal of his hand in marriage."

"Can it be so?" mused Walter, scarcely uttering the words aloud, while a slight thrill ran through his veins, as he thought perhaps the memory of their own intimacy, which had never ceased in fact, might have influenced her.

"What are you musing about, Walter?' asked his companion.

"O, nothing; that is, about what you have told me. It is very queer, for Lord Amidown besides being one of the very best matches in London, has evidently shared her best regards, if not her love, these many days."

"All very true, Walter," continued Clara, "and though I can easily divine the feelings that prompted that refusal, it is not for me to speak Edith's reasons, and time alone must divulge them."

"This is very odd," mused Walter thoughtfully; "think you Sir Robert knows aught of these matters?"

"As yet, probably nothing. But alas! for poor Edith, how much I pity her; she is very, very unhappy."

There was a pause of some moments, during which Clara's eyes were bent upon the floor in a thoughtful mood, while Walter regarded her with more than usual tenderness and interest.

"Let us set her an example, Clara," he said at last, drawing nearer to her side, and taking her hand tenderly within his own, as he looked into the depths of her blue eyes.

"How, Walter, by being unhappy too?" she said playfully, smiling at him as she struggled gently to keep Walter's arm from encircling her pretty waist.

"Nay, Clara," he replied earnestly, "not thus, but by promising to love and cherish each other for a life time. That would be an example for them indeed."

"Walter!"

"Well, Clara."

"Walter, Walter," repeated the fair young girl, in earnest accents, while she half blushed at his familiarity, "have I not begged you never to talk thus to me—nay, did you not promise me that you would not refer to this subject again?"

Walter made no reply to this appeal, but only looked more earnestly the love that actu-

ated him, as he gazed into those soft, clear eyes, and gently strove to retain the hand he held.

"Nay, then, I shall be really angry, Walter Manning," continued Clara, with sudden energy as she extricated her hand, and walked to another part of the room, with an assumed look of displeasure.

Sir Robert had risen a moment before and left them alone together; therefore there was no one to witness this little scene between them that had seemingly occurred so impromptu, so unexpectedly.

Walter Manning sank into a chair without any further remark after Clara left him thus, but his face bespoke such a load of disappointment, such poignant and bitter regret, that even tears could not have lightened the sorrowing picture. He remained thus for perhaps a minute by himself, but when Clara turned to reseat herself at the opposite side of the spacious apartment which formed the reception room, her eyes once more rested upon Walter, and she seemed to pause for a moment struck by the picture of unhappiness she had created, and hastening back to his side, she said:

"Walter, Walter, forgive me if I have been too hasty; but, O, could you truly read my heart, and see the load that often presses it, even when my face is disguised in smiles, and merry words come from my lips; could you know the agony and sorrow that only my sleepless pillow witnesses; O, could you realize for one moment these things as keenly as I do, Walter, you would forgive me, you would pity me, I know you would."

Walter Manning was astounded. He had never seen Clara shed a tear before; indeed her face seemed to him only capable of producing smiles, so sunny had it ever been in his presence. But now, as she stood before him thus, a tear-drop wet either cheek, and her fair young breast heaved with a short aching sob. As she finished what she had said, she covered her face with her hands and sinking into a chair, wept like a child; her feelings were beyond control.

It was true that Walter had more than once before attempted to express to her the tender feelings that he cherished for her, on the first occasion when he had done so, she repulsed him so playfully that he was quite at fault.

The second time she had been more serious, and made him promise, as he regarded her peace of mind, not to refer to this theme again; and thus the matter had stood for months, until the scene had occurred to which we have just referred. But now there was some reason, so earnest, that, as she expressed to him, it seemed to harrow her very soul—a reason so potent that it clothed her face in such a guise as he had never until then seen it wear. He was fairly startled at this, and felt most guilty that he had broken his promise, and while he mused thus, he took her hand gently within his own, and said, tenderly:

"Forgive you, Clara; ah! rather forgive me, who by breaking my promise, have cost you so much sorrow and cast a cloud over your ever sunny sky. Believe me when I say, that in future, let it cost me ever so much grief and pain, I will strive to be silent on this subject, though it be so nearly allied to my happiness. I will condemn my tongue to a Pythagorean silence, rather than it shall make you unhappy even for one moment."

"Thank you, Walter, many, many times," she answered, still weeping.

"Though I cannot understand why reference to an honest and true regard can distress you, Clara, still I drop the theme from this moment, at least until you shall yourself remove the edict of silence."

Clara pressed the hand tenderly that held her own, and left the room without further remark. Her tears having once found vent, they seemed to defy control, and she retired to her chamber to sorrow by herself.

"Is it possible," thought Walter, as she left him thus, "that this young and apparently joyous creatnre, who has kept the house in a merry mood so often, was all the while aching at her own heart. Could she be so happy in appearance and so sad in reality? Can Clara be really unhappy, the witty, merry, beautiful Clara? I did not wonder to see Edith, who is so delicate and sensitive, with melancholy written on her brow, but Clara, Clara to be unhappy. Why it seemed to me as though it would be impossible for her to weep at all, and yet how sad, how very sad she was. How little do we know of each other, after all; how hidden a thing is the human heart!"

THE MISTAKE OF A LIFE-TIME.

CHAPTER XXXIV.—[CONTINUED.]

Walter paused there where she had left him for some time, musing to himself, and walking back and forth in the elegant apartment. At last he paused, and said half aloud in his earnestness:

"She cannot love another—it would be impossible without my knowing of it. Nay, I *feel* that she loves me, ay, without vanity, I may say that I know our affection is mutual. What then can there be so necessarily to separate us? Maybe it is the same reason that has acted upon Edith, a simple cause that will yield before the power of reason. Probably Edith's delicacy has had an effect upon Clara also, and she feels that if her adopted sister may not with propriety receive the addresses of such a person as Lord Amidown, neither can she those of humble Walter Manning. It is odd, very odd. If I thought that she disliked me, it would be quite another thing; that would be reason enough, but here she looks upon me with eyes that speak to my very soul in their sweet and kindly expression, and bids me never speak of these things again.

'Alas! what is it, in this world of ours,
That makes it fatal to be loved?'"

"Well, well," he continued, "there is only one way, though hope deferred maketh the heart sick, I must be patient and bide my time—leaving the result, whatever it may be, to the future."

Walter Manning was not the only one who had mistaken Clara's true disposition and character. Those who generally met her at Sir Robert's, though delighted by her merry conversation and ever engaging manner, added to her remarkable personal beauty, had not set her down as possessing those reliable traits of character that Edith seemed to evince. And yet the most observant of them were often startled by the depth and brilliancy of her native wit, which at times gave token of much thought and research, but none of all those who knew her best, unless perhaps Edith herself, would have supposed that beneath that cheerful and mirthful exterior the canker worm of sorrow and regret was gnawing at her heart, day and night.

"Walter," said Sir Robert, meeting him in the parlor, soon after Clara had left him, "what ails you all? Are you sick, my boy? What has gone wrong in the house?"

"O, nothing, that I am aware of, Sir Robert. I am very well, and was only musing to myself as you came in."

"Only musing?" said Sir Robert, looking at Walter half suspiciously. "Well, what ails Clara? I just met her on the stairs, and if

I'm not blind, she looked as if she had been crying."

"Crying, Sir Robert?"

"Crying, Sir Robert; yes, crying, Sir Robert," repeated his patron, "yes, crying, Sir Robert. I want to know what has possessed you all. Here's Edith, too, coming to the dinner table with swollen eyes—"

"Edith, sir?" asked Walter, absently, interrupting his patron.

"Edith, sir?" continued Sir Robert, "yes, sir, Edith. But what the deuce are you echoing me for in this way? Zounds, if I don't think you are in the plot too, Walter."

"In the plot, Sir Robert?"

"There you are again; yes, I say in the plot, or conspiracy, or whatever it is that is turning all your heads."

"'Pon my word, Sir Robert, it is all a mystery to me, that is to say, I don't understand the matter at all."

"No skylarking, Walter, eh?"

"Fie, Sir Robert, you are pleased to be facetious," replied Walter.

"Well, well, I don't suppose it is anything very serious, and it will probably soon blow over; but at any rate, Walter, keep a sharp look out ahead for breakers," said Sir Robert, with a nautical leer.

"Ay, ay, sir," said Walter, laughing heartily, and following up his patron's lead.

Sir Robert smiled, and turned away from him in his usual good humor.

To say that Walter was puzzled in the present state of affairs, would hardly be a sufficiently strong term to express the fact—he was completely bewildered. In his honest, frank and open disposition, he could conceive of no reason why Clara should thus desire him to avoid a subject so eminently dear to him, when at the same time he felt fully satisfied within his own breast that she regarded him with a love as truthful and earnest as his own. This was the point that puzzled him.

He could even see a far better reason for Edith's conduct, in relation to the offer that she had so lately refused, because he realized that Lord Amidown must doubtless labor under profound ignorance as to her actual origin, while he himself knew full well the story of both Edith and Clara's early life. He could appreciate the truth and delicacy in Edith that would not stoop to deceit in the matter, and also the pride that would not permit her to speak out and expose her unfortunate story to his lordship. But then Walter reasoned that such an actuating motive did not apply or hold good in any way as to Clara's situation, for both knew that he offered her his hand and heart with a full knowledge of the story that made up her early life.

This was the main point that so completely nonplussed Walter's reasoning; but he resolved that he would love Clara none the less. Indeed he need not have determined to do this, for he could not help it; but he made up his mind to play as he had so long done, the part of a brother to both, and trust to time for an adjustment of these matters and the consummation of his hopes.

There was one other person who was no less a keen observer of all that was passing between the two girls and their friends, than was Sir Robert, or the parties themselves; we refer to the good Mrs. Marlow. She too was puzzled not a little, and had it related to any other matter than that of the heart, it is altogether probable that ere this she would have spoken to the young ladies about it. But she said to herself, "time will explain all," and so she went on, as ardently as ever serving her young mistresses with all her heart.

As to Clara, she sought her room and wept long and bitterly, as we have seen Edith do before her; but differently did her grief affect her, seeming to bear the stamp of despair itself—the outpourings of a broken heart. Her fine dark hair hung neglected about her neck, and with her hands pressed against her aching temples, she walked her room like one almost deranged by the thought that rankled in her heart. Now and then she would pause and almost struggle for breath, as though her grief would choke her, and then she would walk again with a nervous, hurried step, that was scarcely less expressive of her mental agony than were her sobs.

> "But thou, remorse! there is no charm,
> Thy sting, avenger, to disarm!
> Vain are bright suns and laughing skies
> To soothe thy victim's agonies;
> The heart, once made thy burning throne,
> Still while it beats, is thine alone."

Alas! poor Clara, so young, so beautiful, and yet so unhappy. Thy heart seems so full of sadness, that it can hardly sustain itself.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE FORTUNE TELLER.

"Men said she saw strange visions, which none besides might see;
And that strange sounds were in her ears, which none might hear but she."

Perhaps no stronger proof of the natural delicacy of both Edith and Clara could have been adduced, than the fact that neither of them spoke to the other upon the subject of their feelings, in relation to Lord Amidown and Walter. A less sensitive heart beating in the bosom of either, would have induced them to discuss the subject together, but as it was, they both held it sacred, and neither alluded to it, though both fully realized the other's position. Edith had not detected Clara in such a manner as she herself had been discovered, but actions speak louder than words, and Edith was observant. Indeed, long before Walter had acknowledged to himself that he loved Clara, Edith had read his heart, and had said so within herself, and afterwards, from circumstances that it is unnecessary to explain, she had discovered the repulse that Clara had gave to Walter Manning.

At this time, all London rang with the fame of a noted fortune-teller, who had shrewdly placed her prices so high as to exclude all but the better classes, and very few, save the nobility, were able to patronize her on this account. According to the papers of the day and common report, this woman seemed really possessed of secret sources of information, so potent and correct as to completely confound those who came to purchase knowledge of her. Showing an understanding of human nature and an experience of the world that was most remarkable, this woman also commanded, in more than one instance, the attention of the wise and philosophical, who came to her often nonplussed by her shrewdness and knowledge, as well as by her consummate tact.

One of the strongest evidences of the power she possessed, had been adduced by certain government emissaries. It appeared that some of the police, who had been sent to her in order that the heads of the department might understand what was transacted at her rooms, were not a little puzzled, for, notwithstanding they came to her disguised with all the art of their calling, she coolly told them who they were at once, and that they would be better engaged if employed in suppressing crime and debauchery in the metropolis, and ended by giving them some piece of information, which she pretended to have learned through her miraculous powers, and which on being inquired into, not only proved correct, but also of imminent importance to the police.

It required but a very few circumstances of this character to transpire, before this singular woman had as much business as she could possibly attend to, and that also on her own terms, being forced to establish regular hours for the dispensing of her power, and to make other regulations that should enable her to

answer and satisfy the increasing demand upon her services. Whether possessed of remarkable wisdom and penetration, or whether getting her information through some secret and unusual channel, one thing was very certain—the fortune-teller did reveal most remarkable and truthful things, and in such a manner as to create amazement and superstition in the minds of those who resorted to her mystic abode.

Knowing well the powerful effect upon our nature of the paraphernalia and pomp of circumstance, and the surroundings with which one hedges one's self in, the fortune-teller had taken good care to furnish her apartments not only in the richest and most tasteful manner, but also to place here and there among the furniture upon the tables and along the walls, strange and uncouth symbols of subjects that none could possibly understand, and which must have been manufactured for this express purpose, but which nevertheless added greatly to the effect of her otherwise strangely decorated and dimly lighted rooms, and to the peculiar surroundings of her own mysterious person, all being admirably arranged for effect.

In a distant corner of the spacious reception room where she presided, was a cross of ebony and a human skull, with some monastic emblems, flanked on either side by lofty burning candles in silver candle sticks. In the corresponding corner opposite, were diverse Mahometan emblems, the Koran and Crescent, while a lamp of perfumed oil, and pastilles of incense, and myrrh from Palestine, were burning upon a pedestal hard by her seat of state. In another corner, was the emblematic fire of the devout Peruvians, with images of other nations mingled together, forming stars and triangles upon the walls. In a fourth, there might be seen the idols and images sacred and profane of a heathen people, cunningly carved in sandal wood, and beside them were mottoes and letters in Chinese and other obscure and heathenish characters, with emblematical pictures rudely pencilled and hung by their side.

A Nubian servant, black as night itself, in a turban of purest white, with the corresponding dress of an Arab, received the visiters to this temple of mystery, and conducted them to the mysterious presence, before which he never failed to kneel and bow three several times, in profound respect, at each return. This strange servant was in himself quite a singular and wonder inducing object. No solicitations could induce him to speak, though he bowed low and accepted all pecuniary gratuities that was offered him by those who came to consult his mistress. It was supposed that the Nubian was dumb.

The mistress of all this strange arrangement, had a coarse and masculine expression of countenance, with swarthy features like those of a Turk. Her face was partly screened by a closely fitting turban, covered with many strange emblems and figures, and surmounted by a serpent coiled at the feet of a pure white dove, formed of silver. Her voice was deep and sententious, but there was one redeeming feature in that strange and repulsive countenance, which seemed capable of so much expression, of either fierceness or pleasure, and which seemed to read the visiter's most secret thoughts.

We say all London was filled with curiosity, touching the strange fortune-teller to whom we have referred. The carriages of the nobility were constantly stopping before her door, and waiting patiently there for their turn to be admitted. Some came incited by mere curiosity concerning one who was able to create such a furor; others, more credulous, came with a secret prompting of superstition, and a desire to learn those things which ordinary life and the everyday resources of time leave undeveloped, and many were the strange questions that were put to the mysterious woman, by lover and husband, male and female visitant.

"Have you heard any particulars about this strange woman, of whom it is said that she knows everything, and who is able to look into futurity with an eye as clear as other people view the past?"

These words were addressed by Walter Manning to Edith and Clara, who sat together in the drawing-room, a few evenings subsequent to that which we have particularly referred to. Sir Robert Brompton was engaged over a game of chess with Lord Amidown in one corner, while the ladies and Walter were sitting together in another.

"Sir Robert was saying that several of his club had made up a party to go and see her," replied Clara. "Is it not very singular that

a pretended fortune-teller should be able to create so much interest and curiosity?"

"Yes, but this woman is different from any of her class I have ever heard of. She is really a very remarkable person, and one who reveals such matters as prove conclusively that she is either gifted with superhuman wisdom, or that she has extraordinary means for obtaining all sorts of information," said Walter.

"Do you really believe her to be gifted above other people?" asked Edith, quietly.

"If we believe the evidence of respectable people, she must be so, though as I have not yet seen her myself, I must acknowledge that I am a little skeptical," answered Walter.

"For my part, I cannot bring my mind to that degree of credulity that will allow me to believe in witches; it seems to me too foolish," said Clara.

"She is no witch," said Walter, "but simply pretends to foretell the future."

"What is that but downright witchcraft?" asked Clara. "If she can do that, she can do things even more wonderful. Now, Walter, surely you don't believe in this woman."

"As yet I am not prepared to say," answered Walter, with assumed gravity.

"He's not in earnest, Clara—don't heed him," said Edith, pleasantly.

"I not in earnest? Now, Edith—"

"Stay, here comes Lord Amidown; let us see what he will say," interrupted Clara.

"Pray what are you discussing?" asked his lordship, approaching them from across the room, having finished his game of chess with Sir Robert. "What is the topic?"

"About a witch," said Clara, biting the top of her fan, and trying to study the expression of his lordship's face, as she saw his eyes rest upon Edith. "Witch or no witch, that's the question, my lord."

"A fortune-teller, you mean, don't you?" asked Lord Amidown.

"A fortune-teller or a witch, just as you please to have it," replied Clara, pleasantly.

"Why do you call her a witch?"

"Because Walter ascribes to her the most witch-like power," said Clara, smiling.

"Be that as it may, Sir Robert and myself were talking about the same person—Madame Duvall. She really seems to have created considerable interest and attention. Let us make up a party and go to her rooms."

"To have our fortunes told?"

"Ay, or merely for observation," replied Lord Amidown, "as you please."

"With all my heart," said Clara; "I think I should enjoy a visit."

"Will you go, Edith?" asked Lord Amidown, turning towards her.

"O, yes; if Sir Robert and Clara go, I will go with pleasure."

"Very good. I'll go and persuade him directly," said his lordship, crossing over to where Sir Robert was sitting.

Sir Robert having agreed to the proposal, a party was made up for the following afternoon, embracing them all, and after agreeing to puzzle the witch with their queries, and also promising to compare notes as to her answers after they should have passed through the proposed interview, they separated for the night. Walter seemed to be the most credulous of the party, and appeared really to think that the woman possessed superhuman powers, but as to Sir Robert and Lord Amidown, they laughed at the idea of her being able to impart to them any positive information, but went out of curiosity, and to make up the party. Clara laughed at all such things, but Edith, though she said nothing, was more than half credulous as to the witch's honesty. She had heard from her friends of the extraordinary power of the person referred to, and indeed had really listened to examples of her performance that were most remarkable and confounding. In short, Madame Duvall's name was in everybody's mouth.

It was nearly twilight on the following day, when Sir Robert and his party took their seats in his carriage to drive to the far-famed fortune-teller's residence. By chance, or the shrewd management of some one, the party were seated, as it regarded the gentlemen's feelings, exactly contrary to what they would have desired themselves, Walter being by Edith's side and Lord Amidown by Clara's—but a half hour's drive brought them to the point of their destination. Arrived here, their cards were received and transmitted with as much etiquette and formality as would have been observed on a visit to the court, and at last they were informed, after waiting impatiently in an ante-room for some length

of time, that they would be granted audience of the august dealer in mysteries past and future, and being thus encouraged, they followed the lead of the Nubian, whose skin shone like polished ebony, towards the witch's presence.

They entered, all together, and paused as they stepped within the door, to survey the singular character of the apartment which we have already partially described. The woman sat upon a raised pedestal, calm and stern in her mysterious gravity. She held a marble tablet in her hand, on which she seemed now and then to be making figures with a large crayon, but only a few moments had elapsed during which the new comers noted these things, and glanced about the room, when the Nubian approached them and asked which of those present would first consult his mistress. After a moment's hesitation, Sir Robert motioned Lord Amidown to go forward first, while they remained as spectators, and following the servant who bowed low before the mysterious woman, his lordship stood before her.

"I come," said he, "to obtain information which, it is said, you can impart, concerning those things which are hidden from the eyes and knowledge of other mortals."

"You would know of the future," said the woman, gazing intently upon him; "but first you would know of me something to prove that my knowledge and power are sufficient to reach your case. Then, listen; you are nobly born, with a single sister living, and no parents; with you rests the long and honored line from which you have sprung. Shall I whisper in your ear with which of yonder ladies you are in love?"

Lord Amidown, almost trembling at the turn the conversation had thus taken, whispered assent as he drew still nearer to the woman, in order to catch her words, and when he drew back again, his face showed that the woman had spoken correctly in designating between Edith and Clara.

"Have I spoken aright?" she demanded, calmly, of Lord Amidown.

"You have," said his lordship. "Pray go on, and tell me of the future."

"Hold," said the woman, making a few figures upon the slab she held. "A dim cloud shadows your future, hanging most densely over the matter of your love. If my knowledge is worth aught to you, then heed it. Your own pride will snap the silken cord, but the revelation of one interested, will join these bonds once more. I have done."

"Surely you will not be so indefinite as this?" said Lord Amidown.

"I can look no deeper," replied the woman, motioning him away.

Lord Amidown came away evidently much impressed with what he had heard from the lips of the fortune-teller, while Walter Manning, at a signal from Sir Robert, was the next to approach the raised seat of the strange woman, and to yield his hand for her minute inspection. She seemed to gaze long and thoughtfully at its various lines.

"You are from the East," she said, at last, "and an orphan; you, like your friend, are also in love; over your future destiny a thickening sky shadows your path so deeply that all seems as night. Far be it from me to discourage a frank and manly heart, but I shall speak no more to you of the future."

"But you have discovered nothing at all to me, as yet," he said.

"Shall I prove to you my knowledge of that which concerns you?"

"Yes."

"Do you remember the rescue some three years since in the tap-room of St. Giles?"

"Hush," said Walter, fearing that they were overheard—for that scene was still a secret with Sir Robert.

"You are satisfied?"

"I am."

Walter turned to his party and tried to laugh, but a weight had been cast upon his heart that he found impossible to shake off, and yet he was not superstitious. The character of the place was such as at once to divest one of all mirthful promptings, and then everything was conducted with such grave and steady purpose, that it seemed impossible not to be impressed with awe. Besides this, the woman had told Walter of facts that had occurred in his past life, that he knew no possible means of her having learned by any ordinary course of events; some mysterious and superhuman agency must have aided her. Then, too, he read in Lord Amidown's face convictions no less evident and strong than he already felt within himself. Edith and Clara had noted the singular effect that

their interview had produced upon both Walter and his lordship—they said nothing.

Edith, after a moment's hesitation, was next led before the woman's chair, who, taking her fair hand within her own, gazed intently at the palm and into the face of its owner, with evident tokens of deep interest. It was some moments before she spoke. Walter and Lord Amidown thought that she was much moved from some cause or other; but be this as it may, she seemed to be quite herself again, as she said, in her deep hoarse voice:

"A fair, transplanted flower, the mildew of pride and the pestilence of disappointment will blight it, but it shall blossom in fragrance again."

There was a pause for some moments, after she had thus spoken.

"Can you tell me no more?" asked Edith, at length, timidly, with her eyes bent upon the floor.

"Of the past, fair girl, or of the future?" asked the woman, gazing earnestly at her. "The former in your case it were better to hurry into oblivion. Do you not think so?"

"I do," said Edith, blushing deeply, as she answered the strange woman.

"Of the future, I have spoken to you already," said the woman, waving her hand for her to retire from her presence.

Edith returned almost trembling, to the arm of Sir Robert, who, noticing her tremor, quietly assured her, while Clara, with a cheerful smile, and light step, followed the Nubian to the woman's seat. The fortune-teller seemed to be even more interested in her than she had been in Edith, and gazed longer and more intently upon her before she spoke. She even covered her face for a moment, and seemed to be ruminating within herself with earnest thought, but raising her hand soon after, she said:

"A strange, strange fortune, child, is thine. Twice transplanted, the past victim of strange mishaps, and a hard fortune, the future victim of thine own delicacy."

After waiting for a moment to see if the woman had any more that she would voluntarily communicate, Clara asked:

"May I profit by your knowledge and know more of the future?"

"No more," said the woman waving her away as she had done before.

Clara seeing that there was no use in importuning the woman had she felt inclined to do so, turned towards her companions with a shaded countenance, and a quick, throbbing pulse.

There was a pause among them all for a few moments, scarcely broken by a single word, and during which it seemed to Edith and Clara as though the beating of their hearts must be audible to those about them. All turned to Sir Robert, to await his turn, and then to leave a place that had seemed to chill their spirits with icy coldness. Sir Robert approached the woman and paused before her. She looked sternly at him for some moments, and then said:

"Of what shall I tell you, Sir Robert Brompton—what phase of life will you have me delineate? Shall I speak to you of the past, the present or the future?"

"As you please, of either portion of time that you will."

"You smile as you reply, and incredulity is written on your face."

"I am not *over* credulous," said Sir Robert, smiling derisively.

"Then test me; of what shall I speak?" said the woman.

"Of the future if you can," said Sir Robert, "though I must say that I probably know as much of to-morrow, as you or any other human being can do."

"Perhaps as you are so incredulous, it were better that I should convince you of my knowledge by referring to some matter which you may think is known only to yourself; would such proof be satisfactory?"

"It would," said Sir Robert, evincing no little interest at her remark.

"Draw nearer, Sir Robert."

"Go on," said he, drawing close to the side of her chair.

The woman leaned forward so as to whisper in his very ear. She uttered, seemingly, but a single word, but that was a most potent one, for it acted upon her visiter like magic. He started back, gazed at the woman and those about him for a moment as though he was bewildered, then drawing his purse from his pocket, he threw it at her feet, and seizing the arm of Edith, led the way with the utmost speed from the room.

"Why do you hurry so?" asked Walter of

Sir Robert, as he struggled forward through the crowd to get to their carriage.

"Hurry? O, I am in no particular hurry, but it is very unpleasant here," he replied, helping the ladies into the carriage as he did so.

"It is true there is little satisfaction to be had here," said Walter, shrugging his shoulders significantly.

"I wish we had not come," whispered Clara, to Edith, "for though one is not prepared to believe all that the woman said, yet there was something about the place, so strange and mysterious, that I could not but feel mystified all the while."

"It would have been better, perhaps, not to have come," answered Edith.

"See Sir Robert," continued Clara, in a whisper, "he looks quite miserable. It is queer what the woman could have said to disconcert him so much."

"It is very odd. I have observed him ever since with pain, for he seems most unhappy."

"She was very vague and indefinite," continued Clara, addressing Walter in an under tone, "and had probably learned just enough about us to seem to know much more."

"Perhaps so; but I must acknowledge that she gave me evidence of her possessing information that I thought known only to a very few, upon a subject upon which it did not seem possible that she could have had any previous knowledge."

All this had been whispered as it were from one to the other in a moment of time, when Sir Robert, who had now fairly taken his seat, looked up impatiently, and in such a manner as to effectually put a stop to any other remarks of a similar nature.

In a quick, irritable tone of voice, he told the coachman to drive them home, and the man knowing well his master's disposition, cracked his lash, and hurried away.

Could they have returned for a moment to the fortune-teller's room, they might have seen that their visit had created more than the ordinary degree of interest in the woman herself, who was now watching them through a small side window with a curious eye.

The party of Sir Robert Brompton and his friends as they drove away from the fortune-teller's rooms, presented a contrast of the most marked character as it regarded their spirits, when compared with their cheerful mien as they entered the house of mystery but one short hour before. Sir Robert seemed to be the most affected of them all, and appeared most strangely disconcerted. True, the rest looked sad enough, and if they believed the prophecy that had just been read to them, they had reason to feel so, for not one of them had much pleasure to contemplate in the fulfilment of these predictions which the woman had so confidently uttered, and so cunningly enforced.

Edith felt less fear or sorrow for herself, than she did to notice Sir Robert's evident uneasiness, and by her gentle and soothing conversation on their way home, she tried to make him forget their late visit to the fortune-teller who had evidently, by some chance, touched upon some unhappy theme with him. All her efforts, however, to awake his wonted spirits failed, and Sir Robert remained exceedingly nervous all the way home. As to Lord Amidown, Walter and Clara, they seemed disposed to remain silent and to meditate upon the promises of the fortune-teller. By some secret power or influence, the strange woman had most markedly affected them all, and each seeing this in the other, became still more conscious of the fact, and more impressed within themselves with forebodings and gloom.

In the succeeding chapters the reader will have an opportunity to judge as to the correctness of the fortune-teller's predictions.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE DISAPPOINTMENT.

——And is not love in vain
Torture enough without a living tomb? BYRON.

THE events described in the last chapter cast a deep gloom, for a few days, over the house of Sir Robert Brompton. He seemed, himself, to be more than usually depressed and gloomy, and shut up within his study, remained thus almost constantly by himself, avoiding even his family circle at meals, and in short, so to conduct himself as to lead them all to wonder at his conduct, though nothing was openly said upon the subject.

Whatever it might have been that the fortune-teller referred to, it was of a character that harrowed up Sir Robert's memory of the past in a most poignant manner, and indeed, must have been of the gravest import possible. He was a person of too strong a mind and resolution to be needlessly moved, and it was this fact, that led those who knew him best to wonder at his conduct. Edith, whose love for her patron led her to observe him more particularly than the rest were apt to do, often heard him walking his room with a hurried step late into the hours of night.

By common consent the subject of their visit to the fortune-teller's was not referred to, for all could see that some unpleasant recollection had been brought to Sir Robert's mind by the consultation that had been held there. Besides which none of the family felt inclined to revive the memory of their visit to the place, since all felt a certain mysterious awe and dread touching the singular predictions that had been made.

The peculiar situation of affairs between Lord Amidown and Edith in particular, seemed to be of a character that must be more definitely settled ere long. True, she had answered his letter and declined his suit, but to one so ardently impressed with love as his lordship had been, all that was as nothing; he must be rejected by her own lips, and that too beyond all possibility of hope, else he would not be satisfied. Thus actuated, he had determined at the first appropriate moment to press his suit more warmly and in person. Though in Edith's subsequent manner towards him he could gather no especial hope, yet it was impossible for him so easily to resign an object in which his happiness seemed to be completely merged, and he watched an opportunity when he might speak to her upon the subject, but as she appeared to avoid any such chance and never to see Lord Amidown except in the presence of others, he grew not a little impatient in his anxiety.

"Walter," said he one day, "I can't get a chance to say one word to Edith in private, and I desire to have an interview very much concerning a very important matter, both to her and myself."

"Well, my dear fellow, I don't prevent you do I?" asked Walter, smiling.

"Why no, Walter, not exactly, but couldn't you manage it so as to help bring one about, eh?"

"If I can help you in such a purpose, I will do so most assuredly."

"Thank you, Walter, for I am as nervous as an old woman upon the subject."

Edith had been quite ill, and indeed confined to her room for some days from the excitement of mind that she had recently experienced, and from her anxiety in behalf of Sir Robert, who hardly appeared to be himself since the unfortunate visit to the strange woman they had all consulted. But some weeks had elapsed since that eventful day, and she was now much better. She had almost regained her usual color and calmness, and having left her room for the first time, was sitting or rather reclining upon a couch in the drawing-room, when Lord Amidown came in. It was a chance meeting. Edith's couch was placed in a shady alcove of the apartment. Lord Amidown thought he had never seen her look so beautiful. Her delicate complexion reflected the scarlet of the hanging curtains, while her eye, in spite of all her caution, bespoke a welcome to him who bent so tenderly over her.

"Edith," said Lord Amidown, tenderly, "I am most happy to see you well enough to be here."

"Thank you, my lord," she replied, as a warmer glow suffused her cheek.

It would be difficult to conceive a fairer picture than Edith presented at that moment. She was just ripening into the fairest proportions of womanhood, like the swelling bud that opes its petals to the genial warmth of summer. Her graceful form displayed a perfection of mould and beauty rarely attained by one so young, while she bore herself with a pliant, winning grace that seemed the very embodiment of ease. Her dark, glossy hair was smoothly parted across her brow and closely looped by a golden clasp at the back of the head, from which confinement it hung in long and natural curls. Her features were brilliantly lighted up by eyes whose wealth of thought and tenderness beamed forth with every smile that dimpled her fair, soft cheek. Lord Amidown felt that so much did he love her now, no power on earth could win him from her, if that love were but truly returned from her own breast. He could hardly refrain from kneeling at her feet even before Clara, and declaring the love that so thrilled and warmed his heart.

Clara, blooming, cheerful and apparently as happy as ever, sat by Edith's head and held one of her hands kindly in her own. A close observer might have detected a glow of pleasure and satisfaction on the fair girl's cheek as she observed the tenderness and love that beamed from Lord Amidown's eyes upon Edith. Her heart knew no jealousy, and she felt really happy that Edith, whom she loved so well, was justly appreciated. As Lord Amidown seated himself, and drew his chair nearer to the couch, Clara pleasantly observed that she would resign her post to his lordship for a few moments, and passing to another part of the room, began to turn over and examine some engravings upon a centre table, until Walter Manning happening to come in, drew her to a seat and engaged her in some pleasant bit of town gossip.

"Clara," said Walter, after looking a moment at Lord Amidown and Edith, and remembering his promise to aid him in a certain object if opportunity should offer, "Clara, you haven't seen the superb new Encyclopedia that Sir Robert has got in his library, have you? the one in four volumes and illumined?"

"No," said Clara, giving Walter a look of intelligence that almost made him blush. "Can we see it now?"

"O, yes, Sir Robert is not in. Will you go in and look at it?"

"With all my heart," she replied. "I am going to the library a few minutes, Edith, with Walter," she continued.

If Clara had read the expression on Edith's face at that moment, she would have seen a regret there at being left alone with Lord Amidown. His lordship noticed and interpreted the expression correctly, but his heart was too full of love for him to remain silent; he deemed this a most propitious moment, one such as he had long been wishing for, and feeling thus, he gazed for a moment upon the fair being before him, and taking her passive hand within his own he said:

"Forgive me, Edith, I implore you to forgive me, if I seem rude or intrusive at this time, but I cannot help referring to the notes which have lately passed between us."

"Your lordship is never rude," said Edith,

slightly coloring at the mention of the subject he referred to.

"Thank you, Edith, I trust not; but why did you write to me so discouragingly, why say that I must never hope for a nearer relationship between us than the name of friend will indicate? How could you pen me such an answer, Edith, one that has made me so unhappy?"

"My lord," said the gentle girl, with a still heightening color, "I wrote to you the truth only. I could not find it in my heart to deceive one who had been so frank and noble in his friendship to me."

"Deceive me," said Lord Amidown with surprise. "Why, Edith, what possible reason can there be why two hearts that love each other truly—for I know that I am not indifferent to you—should not be united?"

"Let us drop this subject, my lord," said Edith, "I asked that it might be so in my note."

"You did; but Edith, when I tell you that my future happiness is so nearly connected with this matter, I trust that you will acknowledge it sufficient excuse for my urging an explanation, will you not?"

"Yes, O yes indeed, my lord, I do not know what I say."

"Pray be calm, Edith. I beg you not to let me distress you."

"My lord," said Edith, with a struggle to be calm, "I am a simple girl, wholly unequal to argue with your lordship, but I know within my own heart, that it is best that we should part at once."

"At once?"

"Ay, my lord, this very hour," she replied earnestly, "this very moment."

"But why, Edith? All this seems most incomprehensible to me. When I realize, as I do now, that my future happiness in life is at stake, surely it seems to me as though I had a right to know why its hopes may not be consummated, and why my heart is to be blighted in its first and only love."

"My lord, I feel that I am too weak and ill to answer you now," she replied, almost trembling with excitement. And she had grown so pale while she spoke that Lord Amidown noticed the alteration as he said:

"If that be the reason why you may not speak, Edith, then I will by no means press you further," he replied; "but will not a word explain all, and place me out of this unhappy and protracted suspense?"

"A word?" repeated Edith.

"Ay, as briefly as thou wilt."

There was but a moment's pause, in which Edith seemed to be summoning courage for some trying purpose.

"My lord," she said at last, prepared to speak by the manner in which he had urged her, "I will speak out boldly. Perhaps it is best for us both, though it may cost me much suffering. You are noble by birth and nature, the blood that courses through your veins is the tide of a noble line of ancestors whom you reckon for many centuries back, you are titled, rich and talented—"

"Nay, Edith—"

"Interrupt me not, my lord," she said, rising from her recumbent posture in the excitement that moved her, "it is fit indeed that I speak, and speak truly. You seek my hand in honorable union, you would lead me to the altar with full confidence in me, all heedless of my humble position, my fortune, or of aught else that concerns me, save that which our everyday acquaintance may have chanced to impart. Now were I to impose upon you, who in your generosity of heart would make me the sharer of the high position and name that are yours, then should I be indeed most unworthy of the regard you profess for me, or even of your respect; nay, I should do you, my lord, a foul and bitter wrong, by accepting the hand you so frankly offer me."

"I know, or at least have understood, that you are of humble parentage and an orphan," said Lord Amidown, kindly, "but what of that, Edith? I love you for yourself, not for the associations of family or property."

"Humbly born, say you, my lord? Humbly born!" repeated Edith slowly, and with a bitter sarcasm of expression upon her lips that almost startled him as he gazed at her.

"I said humbly born, Edith, but I trust I gave no offence by the remark," repeated Lord Amidown, as he gazed with undisguised amazement at the strange expression he read in her face.

"Worse than humbly born, my lord, far worse than that," she said. "Offence? O, no, there's no offence; I did not mean that,"

she continued, with a cool, deliberate expression that quite chilled him.

"I know not what you *do* mean, Edith," he replied. "You almost make me tremble to see you look and speak so very differently from the manner that is natural to you."

"Humbly born, my lord," again repeated Edith, as though she heard not his last remark, "so humbly born, alas! that no one knows of whom, no one knows when, and no one knows where!"

As she spoke thus, a strange, wild and almost demoniac fire beamed from her eyes. It did not seem possible that it was the gentle, sensitive and loving Edith who spoke, but she was uttering the smouldering agony of thought that had been so long pent up and so closely confined within her own bosom. The secret of her life had been uttered, the spell was broken. As she concluded, she had risen to her feet, and stood before his lordship a picture of extraordinary beauty and anguish, for beneath all, there was visible the fearful agony of the heart, that found no outward vent in word or action.

"Still, Edith," said Lord Amidown warmly, "I love you."

"My lord, my lord," she said, in accents almost reproachful.

"I speak but the truth, Edith, when I say that I love you still."

"How can you do so after the deception that has been practised in relation to my origin?"

"You have never deceived me upon that subject," he replied honestly.

"But by my silence, when by chance 'twas referred to, I did so tacitly."

"Nay, Edith," said his lordship, in his warmth drawing nearer to her, and once more attempting to take her hand. "These are objections that can be happily gotten over. I trust that—"

"Nay, nay, my lord," said Edith, drawing back as though there was pestilence in his touch, now that she had spoken thus. "Have a care, remember, of an unknown parentage, the offspring, perhaps, even of infamy!"

"O, Edith, Edith," he exclaimed in tones of agony, at her words. "You have chilled my very life's blood, you have made me wretched, wretched indeed."

Lord Amidown covered his face with both his hands as he uttered this exclamation, and sank, like one comparatively broken-hearted, into a chair. With the last words of Edith, her true position, the low birth of her he had loved so well, and the fearful suspicion that must hang over her forever, all seemed to burst upon his mind at a single glance. How could he make such an one his wife? Would not his ancestors rise from the grave and curse him for thus marring the splendor of their escutcheon? Such thoughts as these rushed through his mind with the anguish they created.

He could not raise his eyes to her face again; his heart ached so as to cause a choking sensation in his throat; he felt as though death at such a moment would be a blessing and a relief. His brightest hopes for the future to be shared with her, his dream of love, his picture of Edith engraven so deeply upon his very heart, and all the ties that so dear a relation as had been cultivated between them, by his more than usual devotedness, were now all rudely dashed to earth, each tender relation was severed at once, all was a blank before him; there was not one sunny spot left for him to contemplate.

Edith gazed at his anguish with a no less aching heart, and a swelling bosom, and then turning away for a moment, strove to hide the big tears that came bursting from her eyes.

"My lord," she almost whispered, as though she felt that she had no right even to address him now.

"Edith."

"Do you blame me that I have spoken frankly, though with so much pain to you?"

"Edith, no, you have done nobly, though you have destroyed my peace of mind for life."

"O, say not so, my lord; look in your own sphere for one who can make you happy, and no one will pray so devotedly for your enjoyment as Edith," she said, still averting her face, to hide the tears that would continue to flow.

"Edith!" said his lordship, in a tone of reproach that spoke more than many words might have done, how vain it would be for him to try and love another after the relation that they had borne to each other.

"Farewell, my lord," said Edith, in an anguish of grief, "farewell forever!"

"Edith, farewell!" whispered Lord Amidown hoarsely, and in a moment after he was in the open air, hurrying as though for life, though he knew not whither, and after, he knew not what.

The secret was at last revealed, and Lord Amidown knew all. The first part of the fortune-teller's prediction had already proved true. He recollected this fact as he hurried along, and the words of the strange woman recurred to him. She said, "*Your own pride shall snap the silken cord*," but did she not also say, thought he, that those hands should be joined once more together? But alas! that can never be; she may have chanced upon the first prediction rightly, but the second is beyond possibility. O, God! that such a blight, such a withering cloud, should hang over one like Edith; one whom nature hath formed for a queen, whom cultivation could hardly improve, so perfect and so beautiful is she by nature, and whose gentleness would grace the fairest lady of the land. Can it be that such an one is the child of infamy? O, terrible word for her to utter to me. What a dreadful thought to contemplate.

"And where could Sir Robert have found this fair, this too beautiful being," resumed Lord Amidown, "and what possible motives could have induced him to deceive me and others as he has done? There is some singular mystery in all this, a strange and cruel business," he continued. "I must see Walter Manning as soon as possible, that I may be fully corroborated in my misery. Perhaps he can explain all to me."

Hurrying home with this purpose upon his mind, he wrote a line to Walter, requesting him to meet him that night at a certain hour at the club, and dispatching a servant, he waited impatiently his return, which at length brought an answer in which Walter agreed to the appointment.

When they met there at the hour designated, Lord Amidown explained the state of his affairs frankly to Walter. He made secret of no portion of his conduct, his feelings, or of what Edith had divulged, but told him of all that had taken place, repeating even Edith's very words that had chilled him so terribly at heart.

"Say, Walter," continued Lord Amidown, in tones of heart-broken anguish, "is all this true that she has told me? Do I rightly understand this unhappy business?"

Walter hesitated; it was a subject that had never been referred to by him to any one, and he had placed a seal upon his lips touching the matter on all occasions, if for no other reason, for Edith's own sake, but thus appealed to, and the subject thus brought up, he could hardly refuse to speak out frankly, and he thought it the best way to do so.

"My lord," he said, "Edith has told you most frankly and truly her veritable history. I speak knowingly, for I was with Sir Robert on the night that he rescued her from one of the vilest tap-rooms in St. Giles. It was not for me to break such a secret to you, but as Edith has seen fit to do so, there is no harm in my corroborating her words."

"Why how strange, how passing strange is all this, Walter. Why should one like Sir Robert seek out this girl and from such a place, to adopt her as his child?"

"For her extraordinary beauty," replied Walter. "Even at thirteen, my lord, Edith was fairer and possessed more real feminine beauty that I ever beheld in another. And then, Sir Robert said she greatly resembled a lost sister of his own, an only sister, who died early, at about the same age that Edith then was. The beauty and resemblance at first attracted Sir Robert, but her sweetness of character afterwards cemented the love he bore her. There was a time when she was stolen away from the house by some villains who had known her in her childhood and old quarters, and then I thought that Sir Robert would have gone mad. He rested neither day nor night in his assiduous exertions to find her once more. But you never heard of her abduction, I suppose, after she had been with Sir Robert some twelve months?"

"No. I know scarcely a word of her history; indeed I knew nothing until she told me to-day. I have credited the story that was generally believed, as to her humble but respectable birth."

"It is indeed unfortunate. I have myself foreseen this result; but, my lord, how could I speak and betray the secret that Sir Robert had almost bound me by an oath never to reveal to any one?"

"I do not blame you," said Lord Amidown, with a sad despondency.

"Thank you, for I esteem your lordship's friendship warmly," replied Walter.

"But what of Clara, was she in the secret too?" asked his lordship.

"Ay, more than that, she is as humbly born as Edith, and comes from the same low sphere of life," answered Walter.

"Indeed?"

"It is true."

"And Walter, excuse me, this unhappiness must be my excuse for speaking so plainly, you love Clara?"

"My lord, yes."

"And realize fully the humble character of her birth, nay, more than that," said Lord Amidown with a shudder, "you realize the possibility of the most fearful facts as to her parentage and birth?"

"They weigh with me as a feather, my lord, when I look upon her sweet face, and listen to the intelligence of her mind."

"Ah! Walter, you have not the burthen of rank, station and blood upon your shoulders to weigh you down. Were I to forget all these things and blindly pursue the love that prompts me, I should become ruined in the eyes of every one. Indeed Walter, could I respect myself or her either, if she were my wife even, knowing what I now do?"

"You speak wisely, no doubt, my lord, but if Clara would be my wife, I would lead her to the altar to-morrow."

Lord Amidown made no reply for some moments, but paced the little ante-room where they had met, with a hurried step. Walter had corroborated all that Edith had told him, the whole business was no longer a problem, and he felt that there was no hope of peace or happiness for him in the future. A feeling of desperation crept over him of dark import.

"Of course, Walter," he said, at length pausing in his hurried walk, "I can visit Sir Robert's no more, but I hope that I may sometimes meet with you; come to me at home, you shall be ever welcome and I shall always remember the period that I have known and passed with you and *others* at Sir Robert's, as the happiest of my life.

"Good night," he said huskily, as he pressed Walter's hand.

"Good night, my lord; if I can serve you in any way, I pray you command me always," said Walter.

As they parted, Walter himself felt scarcely less miserable than Lord Amidown, both on his account and that of Edith. He realized keenly the unhappy state of affairs, but though he lacked not the generous impulse that would have dictated his best services to aid or alleviate either of the parties, yet he saw at once with sorrow how utterly powerless he was in the matter.

"It does seem as though a strange fatality is hanging about us all," he said, to himself.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE SECRET DISCLOSED.

A secret—
Most astounding!
And confounding! SOMNAMBULA.

SIR ROBERT BROMPTON was so much engaged in his own private affairs of late, that he did not observe for some weeks that Lord Amidown had entirely absented himself from his house. It is true he had missed him, but he knew that his lordship was sometimes called into the country for a few days, to visit and oversee his large estates, and presuming that this was the case at the present time, he made no inquiry for him. Edith, who had suffered a relapse of her late illness, induced by the excitement she had again experienced, had engaged a large share of her patron's thoughts. But she was better once more, at least physically, and Sir Robert again sought the solitude of his study with a pertinacity that placed all conjecture, as to the cause, at fault. Understanding his character fully, Walter Manning, although he observed this singularity of conduct, did not think it proper to inquire into the secret annoyance that seemed to be making little less than a complete slave of his kind patron.

But it was not long before Sir Robert noticed more particularly the absence of Lord Amidown. At first he said nothing, half suspecting what was in fact the true state of the case, but watched with a keen eye for himself, the state of feeling that came under his observation. At length one day he drew Walter into his private room, and after exhibiting the prominent signs of a man under the strongest excitement, he paused before Walter and said:

"Walter, why is it that Lord Amidown has absented himself so suddenly from this house—can you tell me?"

"Sir Robert, nothing could induce me to deceive you in anything—I do know."

"Thank you, Walter. I knew you would unravel the business for me."

"Lord Amidown has at last found out the facts relating to Edith."

"Who could have told him that story, known only to ourselves and Edith?"

"She told him herself, Sir Robert, with the most honorable purpose."

"Explain to me—tell me all," said Sir Robert, throwing himself into a chair.

Walter then related in detail the interview he had with his lordship at the club, and every word that transpired between them, as nearly as he could remember, that Sir Robert might exactly understand the matter.

"Thank you, Walter; it was very necessary that I should know all this. We shall meet again this evening."

Walter saw that he would be alone, and turning, he left the study.

"Stay," said Sir Robert, calling after him. "Walter—a word with you."

"Well, sir."

"Not a syllable of this to Edith, you understand, of course?"

"Certainly, Sir Robert; it is a subject I should not be very apt to broach to her, you may be assured."

It might have been an hour after this interview, that Sir Robert continued to walk his room in a state of great excitement, when Walter at last heard him order his carriage, in which he drove away.

Sir Robert told the servant, who put up the carriage steps and closed the door after his entrance, to drive to Lord Amidown's. It was no new point for the driver to direct his horses to, and soon afterwards the carriage stopped at his door. Sir Robert's card was answered, and he found himself welcomed in the most formal manner to the presence of his lordship.

"Doubtless, my lord," began Sir Robert, so much excited that his voice trembled, "you have already surmised the business which has brought me to you at this time."

"You speak very confidently, sir, and with no little warmth," said Lord Amidown, coolly.—"As to the matter of your visit, as yet I have given it no thought."

"It would much better have become the character that I had supposed your lordship possessed of, had you done so," continued Sir Robert, warmly.

"Will you be seated, sir?"

"Thank you," said Sir Robert, waving the courtesy, and continuing to stand.

"You seem to be very much irritated and heated about some matter, Sir Robert Brompton," said Lord Amidown, with provoking coolness, as he threw himself into a chair.

"My lord," continued Sir Robert, "you have of late wholly absented yourself from my family circle, after making it a place of constant and protracted resort for a period of more than two years."

"Well, Sir Robert, because I have seen fit to visit your house for the period of time mentioned, am I bound to do so to the end of eternity?" asked his lordship, somewhat sharply.

"My lord, my lord, let us speak to the point at once. I can see no good to be derived from a bickering, in which both of us may lose our discretion."

"With all my heart, sir, let us come to the point at once," was the reply.

"You will not of course deny, then, my lord, that you have paid marked and constant attention to Edith for nearly a twelve-month past, during which time the strongest intimacy has existed between you."

Lord Amidown turned his head aside to hide the anguish that the bare mention of her name caused in his heart, for though he assumed this insulting air to Sir Robert, he felt no hard feeling towards Edith; indeed he loved her most tenderly still. But feeling as he did, that Sir Robert had bitterly deceived him, he felt the injury keenly, and hence his manner towards him.

"Well, Sir Robert," he said, at last, after more than a minute's pause.

"You have won her love; the entire wealth of her young and pure affection is yours. In short, she is a woman, and loves you, my lord—that is enough."

"Well, Sir Robert," continued his lordship, breathing hard and fast.

"And now, my lord, after having made her all your own, heart and soul, you abruptly cast her off and leave her."

"Stay, sir—"

"Ah! I have touched you at last, even through all that stiff coat of indifference," said Sir Robert, sarcastically.

"Listen, sir," said his lordship, rising to his feet, "it is time for me to speak. All you have said is true—ay, and more, sir. I have loved Edith to very madness; I have gone on from day to day, living in her sweet society, and increasing in affection, until my whole soul has been involved in this one absorbing passion for her. At last, emboldened by her kindness, I tell her my love, and am gently refused, a fact that only adds fuel to the fire that burns within me. Still I respect her wish as thus signified, until in an unguarded moment, captivated by her dear presence, I gently renew my suit and plead at her very feet, when lo! I am told such things by her own lips, that my very life blood is chilled, and I find how blind, how deceived I have been all this time. Yet, in my fond and almost crazy devotion, I still believe that possibly there may be some mistake, some chance misconstruction, or perhaps a ruse, and I call impatiently for other evidence, when your

adopted son, Sir Robert, sets the seal to my misery."

There was a few moments' pause after these remarks, during which Lord Amidown seemed to be struggling to suppress those tokens of feeling and regret, that to another might appear as womanly.

"But that dream is over and past now, Sir Robert," continued his lordship, sadly; "the deceit, whether intended or not in relation to Edith's birth, has been successful in wrecking one heart, aud I do not hesitate to tell you, sir, that so completely has the trick succeeded, that I can never love again, for I have no heart to offer to another now—it is dead and buried! I am more than wretched. Had that girl been not nobly, nay, nor even gently born, but only *respectably*—"

"Hold, my lord!" exclaimed Sir Robert, starting as from a reverie, and struggling with his words as though the effort were like to choke him.

"I say, Sir Robert," continued Lord Amidown, unheeding the interruption, "I ask not rank nor wealth with Edith, for had she only been respectably born, and that fact substantiated beyond a doubt, I could have freely forgiven all in my fond regard for her; but to have the world point its finger of scorn at my wife, is a thought too fearful to contemplate, could the natural repugnance of my own feelings be stilled. But, alas! this cannot be, and I but multiply words upon a painful subject."

"My lord," replied Sir Robert, "that child is as gently born as yourself—ay, you need not stare at me, and gaze with a frowning brow—I am not crazy. I repeat it, she is of gentle blood and an honorable offspring!"

"Sir Robert."

"Well, my lord."

"You could not have the heart in this dilemma to deceive me; to fall from such high hopes again, would be very death."

As he said this, he approached his guest and stood with a most imploring look upon his face.

"Before heaven, I repeat that Edith is as gently and honorably born as yourself."

"The proof, Sir Robert, the proof!" said Lord Amidown, hurriedly.

"Have you entire reliance upon my word, my lord?" asked Sir Robert, who seemed to have wrought himself up to a state of calmness and stern self-possession since he first entered his lordship's apartment.

"Undoubtedly, Sir Robert," he replied.—'Pray proceed with your explanation."

"And, of course, will receive unquestioned that which I shall disclose."

"Most certainly."

"Then know, my lord, that which even Edith herself has never so much as suspected for one moment, since she has known me—*she is my daughter!*"

"In wedlock?" asked Lord Amidown, seizing eagerly upon Sir Robert's arm, and almost holding his breath for an answer. "I say, in honest wedlock?"

"She is the child of my honored wife, the lady Gustine!"

"Do I hear aright, Sir Robert!" exclaimed Lord Amidown, almost bewildered at the thought that rushed across his mind. "Am I myself, am I sane, or has this strange disappointment made me mad? Do you say that Edith is your daughter; really and truly of your own blood?"

"She is."

"Then why all this strange mystery about her—this rescuing Edith from the vile haunt where you found her, and how came she there?" asked Lord Amidown, with rapid utterance. "What does this mean, Sir Robert? I feel that you cannot find it in your heart to tamper with one in my situation."

"Far be it from me," said Sir Robert, solemnly; "I have suffered myself too much mental agony already, from a fearful mistake into which my jealousy of disposition has led me. It may be that you will have a right to know such particulars as I can never impart to any other, save yourself and Edith. If so, all will be explained to you in due time, but I trust that until then you will credit my word in this peculiar matter."

"I will, I will indeed," said his lordship, eagerly, "and I bless you for the words you have spoken," he continued, turning away his face to hide the tears that wet his cheeks so freely.

Having relieved his heart of this strange secret, that had eaten like a rust upon his very soul for so long a period of time, Sir Robert seemed to be as much relieved as one suffering by a fearful plethora, is by the free-letting of blood. He appeared once more like him-

self, and looked calmly upon Lord Amidown now, who, in turn, was walking the room, vainly endeavoring to still the nervous trepidation that was produced by the revelation he had just listened to.

"Shall we go to her, my lord?" asked Sir Robert, at length.

"This instant," replied Lord Amidown, with avidity.

"My carriage is at the door—let us go together," said Sir Robert.

"Thank you, I shall embrace the oportunity," he replied, "but—"

"What, my lord?"

"I have not yet apologized for my rudeness at our first meeting."

"Name it not," said Sir Robert, "it was all very natural, and is already forgotten."

In this amicable mood, the two entered the vehicle and drove to Sir Robert's house. As they both entered the reception room, they chanced to discover Edith alone and reading. Sir Robert had intended to prepare her in some way, before he again introduced Lord Amidown to his house, but circumstances had forced aside this purpose. This accidental meeting seemed to afford, under this state of things, as good an occasion as any other.—But Lord Amidown's impatience put aside all calculation, as he rushed at once to Edith's side and knelt there, overcome by his feelings.

"What means this, my lord?" asked Edith, rising from her seat half bewildered at his conduct, and Sir Robert's presence. "What am I to understand by this singular behaviour?"

It was a most trying situation for all who were there assembled.

Lord Amidown looked confusedly from one to the other, while Sir Robert seemed unable to speak one word, but sought the floor with his eyes, and there the three stood in a most embarrassed situation. The truth was, Sir Robert had started on his visit to Lord Amidown without pausing to think as to what it might at once lead. He was not prepared to explain in so abrupt a manner a subject so important, but there was no choice for him now, and at last he said, in a hoarse voice that was scarcely above a whisper:

"Lord Amidown has been informed concerning your birth and pa—"

"My birth, Sir Robert?" interrupted Edith, with astonishment.

"Yes, Edith," he continued, though not a little embarrassed, "he has been informed, I say, touching your relationship and—"

"Who knows aught of that, Sir Robert?" asked Edith, with a burning cheek, and an earnestness of expression that made Lord Amidown almost start with fear.

"I have been hasty and thoughtless," he answered, almost trembling as he saw the fire in Edith's eyes. "This is not the time or place for an explanation. At an early opportunity, I will reveal all to you."

"Sir Robert, my kind benefactor, what does all this mean?" asked Edith, approaching and laying her hand on her patron's arm. "There seems to be some strange mystery here—I cannot understand you."

"Sir Robert," said Lord Amidown, scarcely less moved than he whom he addressed, "why not tell our dear Edith at once, and make her happy?"

"Not now, my lord."

"Tell me what, Lord Amidown, what is this secret? O, I pray you relieve my mind. Is it, Sir Robert, relating to my birth and parentage, as I thought that I understood you? If so, break the spell, and I will bless you."

There was more than a minute's pause at this painful juncture.

"Edith, calm yourself," said her patron, at last; "the subject is relating to your birth; at another time, I may explain all, but for the future—know that Sir Robert Brompton is your father!"

For a moment, the beautiful girl cast the natural ringlets that clustered about her head away from her face, and shook her head as if to relieve it from some sad weight; the blood left her cheeks, which became as pale as marble, and thus she gazed on vacancy, but her eyes gave back no reflection. The sight seemed gone altogether. More than a moment passed thus, in which no word was uttered by either of the party.

"Edith! Edith!" said Sir Robert, at length, in an agony of suspense, "speak to me."

But there was no answer—Edith stood like one bereft of speech.

Lord Amidown thought she would faint, and sprung to her side to support her, but

she did not evince any token that his support would be thus required. Suddenly the blood which had so quickly left her cheek, returned again, with a rushing current that suffused her whole neck and face. After becoming in some degree equalized, it once more left her cheek; but there remained a far more brilliant color than had ever been there before, while her eyes seemed lighted with a new and startling brilliancy. A long sigh escaped her lips, and the struggle of nature seemed to be over.

An expression of keen disappointment overspread Sir Robert's countenance. He had looked to see her fall upon his neck fondly, and weeping there, rejoice to have found in him a father. But how different was the scene from this! She had even withdrawn from his side, and now stood quite aloof from him; a strange composure of manner pervaded her appearance, and a calm settled smile took possession of her countenance, while a spirit almost of indifference seemed to beam from her eyes, as they rested now upon Sir Robert, who was regarding her most intently.

Turning to Lord Amidown, with the most serene composure, she said:

"My lord, it seems that you and I have been misinformed, touching the subject matter of our last interview. It is pleasant, very pleasant, to be so easily helped out of a dilemma!"

"It is indeed most agreeable," said Lord Amidown, astonished at her coolness, and at the peculiar expression that her countenance had assumed while she spoke.

Sir Robert stood like a statue, gazing in amazement, and astounded that Edith did not even speak to him after what had passed.

"At a more fitting time, I shall be pleased to meet your lordship," she continued, with the same calmness that had characterized her manner for the last few minutes. "At present I must retire to my room."

As she said this, she courtseyed low to Lord Amidown, and without even so much as looking at Sir Robert at all, turned and walked quietly out of the room.

"She did not even speak to me," groaned Sir Robert, gazing after her.

"This strange news is too much for her," answered his companion; "she will require rest and many tears to relieve the fulness of her heart. In the meantime, Sir Robert, I will take my leave."

"Your lordship must make yourself at home here," said Sir Robert.

"Thank you," he replied, bowing himself out, as he did so.

Sir Robert was now once more alone. The owner of that proud mansion stood there like a statue where Edith and Lord Amidown had left him; some strange fascination seemed to bind him with irresistible force to the spot, for he did not move even one single step from where he had stood when he revealed that startling secret to Edith. He now looked like one whose cup of misery was full to the very brim, his eyes still rested upon the door where Edith had made her exit, and it was of her that he was thinking so intently. He pressed his hands upon his side, and breathed deeply, but as though the effort cost him no little pain, and then his chin sank upon his breast, like a condemned criminal; a sort of lethargy seemed to creep over him, but in a moment after he aroused himself from this mood, and asked himself:

"Is it possible that I have at last revealed this terrible, burning secret, and does Edith receive it unmoved, she whom I have loved so deeply, so tenderly, she who has seemed to reciprocate every thought of my heart? Have all my hopes been thus blighted in one single instant? has the cunningly laid plot of years been thus terminated? She left me but now, without uttering one single word, nay, she did not so much as look at me when she turned away. O, Edith, Edith! is this the repayment of my fond and doting affection? am I to be thus regarded for all my sufferings in your behalf? my heart will break if it findeth not relief. I doubt me but I am dreaming, the annoyance of that cursed fortune-teller has half turned my brain—this cannot be so;" and as he reasoned thus, he looked hurriedly about him for a moment, and then continued:

"No, no, it is no dream," he almost groaned out; "it is a stern and vivid reality."

Sir Robert threw himself heavily into a seat, and with his face buried in his hands, leaned upon the table by his side, a picture of wretchedness and disappointment. The main hope and prop of his life seemed crushed, and the expression of his face showed how keenly he realized his misery.

After remaining thus for a little while, he rose to his feet, and walked the room hurriedly, talking all the while almost incoherently, while his grief, which found no vent in tears, seemed to make him almost beside himself. He paused now, and with an effort at calmness, asked himself deliberately:

"Have the nicely laid plans of nearly a score of years been thus frustrated in one single moment? Has the hour to which I have so long confidently looked forward with the brightest hope and dearest expectation, at last arrived but only to curse me? What have I to live for now? what charm will life have for me, bereft of that child's love? O, how sadly I have mistaken her heart, how poorly have I read her disposition. But let me pause; perhaps it was excitement—perhaps she will yet return to smile upon and kiss me again with her heart beaming from her eyes. I may have done her injustice. It came suddenly upon her, she was unprepared, and that is the reason of her singular behaviour."

Scarcely had Sir Robert made this remark when the door opened, and Edith entered hurriedly, and approaching him with a strange expression in her face, said;

"Are you my father?"

"Edith?"

"Are you my father?"

"I have already spoken to you on that subject, Edith," he answered, soothingly.

Startled at the singular abruptness of the question, and the manner in which she had addressed him, Sir Robert stood gazing upon her in amazement. It was too evident, and he soon fully realized the fact that reason was tottering on her throne, and that Edith was mentally deranged already.

"If you are my father, then why don't you say so?" she continued, with singular earnestness, and approaching close to Sir Robert's side, she looked up into his face with such vacant eyes that he shuddered.

"Edith, Edith, you are ill, and need repose," said Sir Robert, as he watched the changing expression of her eyes, now bent upon him with a wild, glaring lustre.

Then again she seemed to become more subdued and calm, as she said:

"If you are my father, it is very unkind in you not to have told me so before. It would have saved me much misery, much misery," sse repeated, shaking her head sadly.

"I will explain all to you at another time," answered Sir Robert, soothingly, as he averted his face to hide the agony that her vacant and listless air produced upon him.

"But where is my mother?" she asked, with a startled energy, as the thought came over her suddenly.

"In heaven, I trust, Edith."

"Heaven? Is that a long way from here?" she asked, vacantly.

"I cannot bear this any longer," he exclaimed, in agony.

Ringing the bell, Sir Robert sent a servant in all haste for Clara, who soon after answered the summons, and to whom Sir Robert whispered that she should observe Edith closely, as she was evidently quite ill, wandering in her mind, and if possible, he desired her to urge her to retire and sleep.

"Clara," said Edith, interrupting him, "this is my father, you did not know that, but it is true; he has told me so himself. It is odd, though, isn't it, Clara?"

Sir Robert whispered to Clara, saying that she must not heed her words at all, and that he would himself explain all to her at a proper time.

"Come, Edith, come," said Clara, soothingly, putting her arms about her waist. "Let us go to our chamber for a while. Wont you go to please me, Edith?"

"O, yes."

"Well, come, then—I am going."

"And leave him?" she asked, pointing vacantly at Sir Robert.

"Yes, for a little while—come."

"But speak to him, first, Clara—congratulate him on having me for a daughter. Wont you?" she continued, as she held back from leaving the room, and motioned Clara towards Sir Robert.

"Alas, alas, what a sad business this is," said Clara, looking at her patron. "What can ail poor Edith?"

"Never mind about the cause, now, Clara; but try and get her to her chamber."

Clara was confused, she knew as yet nothing of the fact, and though she strove to obey Sir Robert's wishes, as to soothing Edith, yet she was blind as to the cause of this unhappy scene.

"I left her so well but a few moments since," said she, sadly.

"Take her away, take her away as quickly as you can," said Sir Robert, earnestly. "I will explain it all to you at another time, Clara. She will go with you now."

"Come, Edith, dear, come with me to our chamber, will you?"

"O, yes, Clara," she replied, leaning upon her companion as she went.

But she paused again ere they passed outside the door, and looked back at Sir Robert, while her brain seemed to be striving to master and express some thought that was but half formed from mental weakness; but she could only shake her head sadly without uttering any coherent syllables. She muttered something to herself that Clara strove in vain to understand, but all seemed to be rather the action of a diseased brain than of any definite ideas. Clara regarded her with a feeling of awe, so mysterious was all this, too, as it regarded its true import; but she gently soothed her, and urged her with persuasive speech to come to her chamber. At last she turned to her, and asked in reply to Clara's solicitation for her to come with her to their chamber:

"What for?"

"So that we may be quiet, Edith, so we may lie down and sleep."

"Sleep, what is that?" she asked, vacantly.

"To go to bed, Edith, and close the eyes in forgetfulness, and to wake refreshed."

"Forgetfulness! that is good, forgetfulness is very good. I wish I could forget."

"Well, come, Edith, we will go and try to forget," said her companion, urging her away.

But Clara was striving with a heavy heart. She felt that there was something sadly wrong in this business, and her love for Edith rendered her doubly anxious, for she could gladly have taken any pains to have saved her friend from the infliction.

In the meantime, while this scene was going on between Edith and Clara, Sir Robert stood in an agony of suspense, because she was not removed from the apartment, until at last she sank her head upon Clara's shoulder, and quietly passed without the door of the reception room.

It would be impossible for us to explain fully the anguish that tore Sir Robert's heart at the scene which we have just described. Poor Edith seemed to have lost her senses entirely, and Sir Robert his peace of mind forever. This business was evidently the crisis of his life, but to explain fully how this strange state of affairs came about, and to show why Sir Robert reproached himself so keenly, we must refer the reader to another chapter.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

A STRANGE PLOT.

"Evil ends peep out o' the tail of good purposes."

It has not before been mentioned in the plot of our story that the lady Gustine bore Sir Robert a child, a lovely infant, and in all of his jealous moods, the father seemed to turn back in his heart to this offspring, in whom he hoped to find one eventually who should love him truly, and upon whose affection there should be no blight. It grew with the father to be the one engrossing wish and hope of his life, and he looked forward to the consummation of the picture of his fancy, much as the weary mariner doth look forward to the peace of his fire-side after a long and tempestuous voyage.

The reader will remember that a spirit of jealousy was Sir Robert's evil genius, that he was often completely under its control, and made most wretched by it. He seemed to think that no one could respect or love him, except from interested motives, and then they would but assume these traits. This was at first induced by his lameness, solely, but it was also much augmented by the state in which the small pox had left his face after his sickness in India, and even to this date in our story, he felt acutely the personal defects which marred his manliness. While Sir Robert was abroad, it will be remembered that his wife died, leaving her child scarcely more than an infant, much too young to have any fixed idea of home, to the care of strangers.

When Sir Robert heard of the mother's death, he at once despatched his trusty companion and friend, Frederick Howard, to manage his affairs in London—and that portion of his instructions relating to the child, were by no means of the least important character. To this friend of his, it will be remembered that Sir Robert had fully opened his heart, and his companion knew his patron's disposition far better and more correctly than did Sir Robert himself. His patron had often expressed to him the fear that his daughter would grow up to think of him as her father, and therefore as one who must be loved as such a relationship demanded, but as to her loving him for himself alone, his jealous disposition seemed too stubborn to admit of such a possibility. Sir Robert would say:

"Every hour of our association will be embittered by doubt, for am I not most hideous to behold?"

"Indeed no, Sir Robert."

"Perhaps not to one who reasons and thinks like you, but to one of the other sex, it is quite different," Sir Robert would say; "the eye must be pleased, believe me, before the heart is moved."

"But sympathy and kindness will clothe

any form with beauty, so far as the eye of those who are influenced is concerned; deformity is robbed of its power by love."

"This is subtle reasoning, and rather unlike your usual creed," Sir Robert would say; "for I have been more confirmed in my belief of the sordid selfishness of the world since we have been together, than ever before."

"Touching this matter of your daughter, Sir Robert, I think you carry the principle too far—ties of blood are very strong, and we do not often see them desecrated and entirely disregarded."

"Perhaps not, nor do you often see such a looking object as I am, to tempt a breach of all principles of humanity and nature between a child and its parent."

"Nay, Sir Robert," his friend would answer, "I assure you that your disposition has gotten the better of your judgment, and your fancy magnifies trifles into matters of grave import."

"Ah, my friend, if you could rightly understand me," said Sir Robert, "I think you would not wonder at my feelings. For years I have longed to be loved for myself alone. In the lady Gustine I thought I had found a being to love and cherish, but somehow the foul fiend separated our hearts. Now there seems to be a faint glimmering of hope in my daughter, if she should live, but still my foreboding soul tells me the result will be disastrous to my peace and happiness. If we were in a more humble sphere of life, if she did not know herself born to a fortune, perhaps it would not be quite so certain that she would love the world and not me."

"Feeling thus, Sir Robert, you can never love her yourself as you should do. You start with her at disadvantage, by being jealous of her before she is capable of evincing any great degree of love or dislike."

"I realize it all, and dread the inevitable result. Ah! I would love her so dearly as she grew up by my side, if only assured that she loved me in return with such a love as I long to share."

"I must say, frankly, Sir Robert, that I fear your jealousy of disposition is not sufficiently under control; but if it is too powerful for you to combat with reason, we must accommodate ourselves to circumstances."

"We must hope for the best, and leave the result to fortune," replied Sir Robert, thoughtfully.

The reason why we wish to impress the actuating motives of Sir Robert strongly upon the minds of the reader is, because they were the prime moving cause of the most vivid scenes of his life, and the origin or mainspring as it regards the plot of our story, which finds its rise in the jealousy of Sir Robert's character. It will be seen ere the close of the present chapter to what blind extremes it led him on.

Frederick Howard, who was of a somewhat misanthropic disposition, could fully appreciate and sympathize in his patron's feelings, and of course this fact led Sir Robert to feel a warm and constant interest in him through a spirit of sympathy alone, though his companion's power of mind and natural good taste caused Sir Robert to realize much satisfaction in his society. Indeed his patron had given so many tokens of his confidence and reliance in him, that his companion was emboldened to ask of Sir Robert perhaps the most peculiar and trying boon that he could possibly have devised. It was relating to his daughter, whom Mr. Howard was about to visit in the character of a protector, until such a time as Sir Robert should have arranged his affairs and returned himself to England.

When his agent was about to leave him at Calcutta, he asked for permission to take charge of Sir Robert's child, and to direct her taste and mind after his own judgment, at least until he should himself return. He argued with Sir Robert, that after having been so long associated with him and so intimately understanding the relative position of matters, as well as knowing Sir Robert's one weak point, that if permitted to adopt his own plan, he could so direct and influence the child as to obviate the possibility of every trouble that his patron had anticipated might spring up to mar his domestic happiness, and so direct and instruct the child that she should love him, not because it was her duty to do so only, but truly for himself.

Being so intimately connected with his agent, by so many reasons as we have shown, Sir Robert was induced to give him one more proof of his undiminished confidence by entrusting his child to his care, and with few qualifications, Sir Robert cheerfully consented

to the plan proposed by his companion, and Mr. Howard departed with a *carte blanche* over Sir Robert's entire domestic concerns, as well as to assume the control of his business matters. Time brought him to London, where by virtue of his authority, he assumed immediate and sole control over the family of Sir Robert's household, and prepared to put into execution a plan which could only have found birth in a misanthropic brain, though its ultimate object and honest intent was solely to aid his friend's future happiness in relation to his child.

His first step was to pay off the servants and dismiss them, then to change the nurse who had so long had charge of the child, for one better suited to his purpose. Having by degrees arranged these and other matters of a similar character to suit himself, he gave out that the child was to be shipped to Sir Robert at Calcutta, as he designed to stay for some years in India. However strange might have appeared to many the idea of sending so young a child on such an errand, there were none who felt authorized to dispute Mr. Howard's unlimited authority, more especially as he had taken very good care to establish its legal character by means of the paper which his patron had supplied him with, to guard against contingencies.

The lady Gustine had few blood relations, and those were far away on the banks of the Rhine. Her father had died not long after his daughter's marriage, and thus there were few, if any, on her side, to feel any great interest in the child. As to Sir Robert's family, we have already said that he had no near relations living, and thus situated, it was not strange that Mr. Howard found few, if any, to question his authority, even as it related to Sir Robert's most private concerns, and more particularly as it regarded the disposal of his daughter on a voyage to India to meet her father.

"I heard the child was goin' to sea, and I cum to say good-by to her," said her late nurse. "It's a shame, so it is, to make a little thing like her go so long a voyage."

"O, but it is to meet her father, you know, my good woman," was the reply.

"Yes, to be sure, its the only excuse in the world, so it is, for such a thing."

"When she comes back a fine lady, she will be so altered, you'll not know her."

"I'll be in my grave before that time—but good-by, my little pet;" as she said this, the woman kissed the child, and shed a flood of honest tears at parting with her, after some two years of constant attendance upon her simplest wants.

The child cried, too, for a moment, but as soon as the nurse was gone, it was laughing again.

By a well concerted plan, it was made to appear that the child was shipped from Liverpool for Calcutta, with a hired nurse, but on the next day after the departure was supposed to have taken place, Frederick Howard placed in charge of an elderly and very humble woman, who lived in the outskirts of the town, a little girl of some three years of age, declaring that it was an illegitimate offspring, and that he desired her to take good care of it, allowing it to want for no necessity, for which she should be regularly and fairly remunerated by him. The instructions she received were of the most minute character. The child was to be treated with the utmost kindness, and to have all necessary food, but to share everything with the woman, who must pretend to be her friend and sole protector. Above all things, no luxury was to be provided for the child, and the utmost secrecy was enjoined upon the woman, for whom it was made an object to keep most sacred the secret imparted to her.

Having arranged this matter with an ingenuity and care that was worthy of a better cause, so that all trace of the little child was lost to her friends, save that she was presumed to have been shipped as represented to meet her father abroad, Mr. Howard then wrote to Sir Robert to explain to him in full the plan which he had adopted for his child, and which he felt the utmost confidence would be attended with the happiest result. So well did he depict this plan in his letter, and so adroitly did he calculate the true manner in which to operate upon Sir Robert, that although his patron was shocked at first by its relation, yet after reading the letter again and again, he became reconciled to, and even approved of, the strange plan. Sir Robert would never have originated such a plan as his agent had arranged, but now that it was once practically adopted, the peculiar feeling to which

his agent had appealed in his letter, bade him to acquiesce, though reluctantly.

"God grant that I do no unnatural, or unjust thing in my conduct to that child!" said Sir Robert, as he sealed up the letter in which he signified his approval of his agent's plan, and dispatched it for England.

His agent had acted honestly on his part, and had stated to him exactly the truth. He told Sir Robert that the child was placed with a very humble, but respectable woman, who knew nothing of its origin, but believed it to be an illegitimate child. That means had been so taken and consummated that it was impossible for her to ascertain aught concerning her charge, and that all his friends believed the child to have been shipped to him at Calcutta. That the woman who had charge of her would be strictly observed by him, and that she had been most carefully directed as to her kind treatment of the little boarder, who was to have every necessity and ordinary comfort, but no luxuries lavished upon her.

So much related to the present condition of the child, the future plan he laid down thus: She was to remain for a period of years in this condition of life, or at least until she should become old enough to realize her situation, when Sir Robert should manage, as if by accident, to meet and befriend her, winning her confidence and love by his kindness, which the child, having no claim upon him for, would the more highly prize. Having won its heart thus, he should draw her still nearer to him by adoption, and finally, when all doubt as to her real regard for him should be removed, and at a suitable period, the true relationship should be acknowledged. But, on the contrary, if it was found that she was likely to realize those doubts and fears that Sir Robert's jealousy had suggested, then let the secret remain, and the child be treated as she deserved.

As we have before said, none but a most misanthropic soul could have originated such a plan; but such power had Frederick Howard gained over Sir Robert, and so shrewdly did he manage his correspondence, that his patron was nevertheless persuaded into its adoption, though somewhat reluctantly. Several matters seemed strangely enough in their relation to the affair, to favor the purpose that had been adopted, one of these being the fact that the vessel in which the child was supposed to have sailed, was cast away at sea, and every soul on board perished. Mr. Howard took good care to have this fact properly trumpeted, in order to add to the greater security of his plan. This fact alone, well managed, was sufficient to guard against almost any contingency as it regarded a discovery.

"The loss of that child must be a sad blow to Sir Robert," said one of his friends to the agent.

"Ay, most sad."

"It being the very last representative of his long line of ancestors, and a most beautiful child too."

"Nothing could be more unfortunate," replied the agent, with well affected sorrow; "but Sir Robert would not consent to be any longer separated from it, and so, in accordance with his instructions, the child was shipped for Calcutta."

Let the progress of the story show the result of all this intrigue, cunning and deception, relating to the child.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE RESULT OF THE SCHEME.

—"And thou—O, thou didst throw
That crushed affection back upon my heart."

Sir Robert Brompton, enjoying all the regal comforts of East Indian life, was not altogether content as it regarded the situation of matters at home. His busy fancy would often draw before his mind's eye such pictures of his child as would render him exceedingly uncomfortable and discontented. He often detected himself drawing comparisons between the manner of life which he led himself, and the probable way in which his child was then living. It was such thoughts as these that troubled him so much, and that rendered him at times quite dissatisfied both with Mr. Howard and himself.

More than once, Sir Robert had written to his agent to see the child often, and to make it his particular duty to see that she lacked no comfort or care that was requisite to her health and improvement, and indeed he had said several times that he thought the plan had much better be abandoned altogether. The next letter from his agent, however, would quiet his conscience and anxiety, and by its well-managed and shrewdly-put arguments over-persuade Sir Robert's mind and satisfy him that all was right, and would ultimately turn out for the best good of himself and the child.

There can be no doubt that Mr. Howard thought he was doing for the best; indeed, after time showed that he had administered the trust that his friend had placed in his charge, with the most scrupulous and honorable punctuality, but the truth was, he saw life through a false phase, through a glass darkly, and therefore, in his judgment, he was misled. There could be no possible reason why he should have proposed the plan which he had put in practice, as it regarded Sir Robert's child, except with a view to promote his friend's happiness, and to test his system of philosophy. In fact, he was a most conscientious man, and had done nothing that he had not fully explained to his employer.

But a most unexpected result was to come from all this scheme—one that neither Sir Robert nor the agent had anticipated.

Years rolled on, and the child remained in its humble home, believing itself an orphan, or little better than one, and Sir Robert still remained abroad, partly by his own will, and partly by the singular vicissitudes of fortune which had cast him and his fellow-voyagers upon a lone island of the ocean. From thence the reader has followed him through the scenes we have related. On his arrival in England, it will be remembered that he found that Frederick Howard had been suddenly at-

tacked by sickness, and had died. Of course, he had left no record of where the child might have been found; the idea had probably never occurred to him, and had it done so, he would have weighed the propriety of giving the secret into another's keeping well, before he would have done so. The truth was, that the necessity for secrecy had been most religiously observed by him, nor had he ever mentioned aught to a human being that might lead to the discovery of the plan adopted for the child's support. Had his illness been less sudden, no doubt, had his reason remained, he would have left some paper for Sir Robbert's information; but this was not the case, his attack was sudden, and affected the brain almost immediately, nor did his reason return again before his death.

Of course, this being the case, Sir Robert Brompton's daughter, whom it had been proposed to lose for a while, as we have seen, now became absolutely lost indeed!

For Sir Robert to advertise her, or make his bereavement public, would be to expose his own weakness, and publish broadcast his shame to the world. For the same reason he found that he could employ no agents in the search which he immediately instituted, but that he must prosecute it alone and unaided. This, however, he did with the utmost vigor, and disguised as a member of the humble class of citizens, and sometimes even as a beggar or an abandoned character of some sort, he penetrated, for many months, into the various haunts of the lower classes of London. It was while engaged in these arduous and often dangerous excursions, that he so often remained absent from his home, as Walter used to remark, and when he returned would be so exhausted and depressed. This was the business that weighed so heavily upon his heart at that time.

At last fortune smiled upon these efforts, and he happened, as we have intimated before, to meet Edith; he was struck by her likeness to his wife; he eagerly inquired concerning her, and fully satisfied himself by a train of circumstances, that this poor forsaken but beautiful child was indeed his own daughter. Though impelled by the most impatient anxiety, he fully satisfied himself before he took any decided steps towards adopting her. For certain reasons that we need not refer to, he found it by no means so easy to obtain possession of Edith, which was the name of the child in her new sphere, and was therefore forced to perfect the plan which was represented in the opening chapter of our story. It was an easy matter to invent a story of interest, relating to a girl he had chanced to meet in the street, which Walter readily believed, touching her resemblance to a young sister which he had lost some years before. And as the proposition to capture and bring her away from the den where she was, partook of an adventurous and chivalrous character, Walter readily embarked in the enterprise.

At this stage of affairs, having committed himself so far, Sir Robert Brompton thought it best and indeed his only correct policy, still to persist in keeping the secret that had already gone so far in its effects. Having sacrificed so much to test the plan that he had at first reluctantly adopted, he thought it was but fair to himself to give heed to it long enough thoroughly to test its efficacy. In the truthful love and fondness of Edith, he thought that he discovered the good effects of his friend's plan. How grateful was that love to his sensitive heart; he was almost too happy, for he loved his child with more than ordinary affection. The strange vicissitudes that had connected themselves with her heretofore, heightened the natural interest that he felt for her, while her singular beauty added a charm to all that made Sir Robert dote upon his regained treasure.

Every one observed this unusual fondness, and even Walter, who at the time thought more of Edith than of all things else, was so much struck with it, that he said one day, carelessly:

"Sir Robert, I sometimes think that were Edith indeed your daughter, you certainly could love her no better, and perhaps would not love her quite so well."

"Do you think so, Walter?" he asked, thoughtfully, and looking hard at him the while, as though he wondered if his young friend had even suspected for one moment the true state of the relationship between them.—But Walter's expression was not of a character to heighten the fear if he realized it, and his mind was quiet again, as his protegé replied:

"Why, yes, Sir Robert, she seems to be the very sun of your existence."

"She is, Walter, the light of my eyes, and the warmth of my heart."

But this occurred before Edith had been yet a twelvemonth in Sir Robert's household.

Of course, he realized fully that the time must come, eventually, which would call for a revelation of the secret, both for his own sake and Edith's; but Sir Robert had placed that period of time at a very remote distance; indeed he did not permit himself to dwell upon that theme at all—it was too unpleasant to contemplate. He realized that Edith loved him devotedly, ay, even beyond a doubt, and he was content. He had arrived at this happy degree of confidence when he was a second time made miserable on account of his child.

When she was stolen away from him, it very nearly broke his heart. Again he dared not make his loss public, or advertise her, for that would make his private affairs so public as to lead to strange suspicions and conjectures in the public mind, and even Walter wondered at this desire for secrecy, this dread of publicity, when there seemed to him to be so much at stake. But Sir Robert paid away his money freely in private efforts to gain intelligence, besides which, himself and Walter wrought almost day and night for nearly a whole year, though all in vain as the reader will remember, until at last Edith once more returned with Clara.

A reviewal of these events brings us once more to the present bearing of our story, and the present situation of Edith and others of the household of Sir Robert.

When the reader realizes how much his affection for Edith had taken hold upon the heart of Sir Robert Brompton, how completely bound up he was in this regard for his child, how many vicissitudes she had encountered, each one endearing her still more to him, when we realize that Sir Robert had no one else to love but her, and that she was the only child of one whom he had loved most dearly, we say when all these matters were realized, it will not be wondered at that Sir Robert seemed so completely miserable and broken-down, when, after revealing to Edith that which he thought would but increase her wealth of affection for him, he found her turn coldly away, without one gentle word, one single kiss, to assure him of her duty and regard.

The plan which had cost him so much anxiety, and which he had been years in consummating, which had given the best promise of complete success even to the very last, had in the denouement signally failed. The hope of so many years had fallen to the ground, and Sir Robert felt crushed in the ruin it left. As he thought upon the matter now, Edith's aberration of mind seemed to him to be almost a relief to him, dreadful as it was to contemplate, for had she conducted this in a calm and cool manner, he could hardly have borne up under his shame and chagrin.

With all these particulars in mind, the reader will comprehend more fully than might be otherwise done, many of the earlier scenes and events of our story.

In this dilemma and the agony of grief induced by the present state of affairs, Sir Robert turned to Clara, and strange enough, under the circumstances, found most effectual balm and solace in her gentle condolence.—Indeed so did she win upon his confidence and love, that he told her the circumstances which we have related, and even the *motive* that had led him to consent to Edith's first removal from her home. He secreted no matter from Clara, and opened to her now more fully than he had ever done to any one, the secret promptings of his heart. There was a vein and resource in Clara's conversation, that Sir Robert had never observed before. Perhaps her untiring tenderness and gentle assiduity to Edith first aroused his love more strongly, and afterwards ripened it to full force, for certain it was that he sought her society frequently now, and seemed to rely upon her for aid and comfort. To one who paused to notice their relative position but a comparatively short period before, this would have seemed strange.

Lord Amidown came often to Sir Robert's house, but he came only to weep and sorrow over her he loved, for Edith, like Ophelia, was only fit to strew flowers now; her mind seemed quite gone forever.

"Seems she still as listless and unheeding as ever, my kind girl?" asked Sir Robert, of Clara. "Are there no tokens of returning reason, in her words or actions?"

"She is still as vacant as ever, Sir Robert,"

Clara replied, "and does nothing but dream while she wakes all the day long. She sang so sweetly yesterday."

"Did she?" said Sir Robert, turning away to hide a tear as he thought of her.

"I think she talks less of late, and not so frequently alluding to herself and you."

"And what says her physician to that, Clara?" asked Sir Robert.

"He thought it a favorable sign, but he looked anything but encouraging to-day, when he went away."

"Alas! Clara," said Sir Robert, taking her hand, "in this severe affliction, I feel that I should be quite unmanned, but for your kind sympathy. It is my only prop now."

"O, sir," said Clara, her bright eyes sparkling with real satisfaction as she spoke, "I owe you so much, and am so deeply indebted to you for everything, that it rejoices me much to have you speak thus to me."

"I see, Clara, that we have not been so intimate as we should have been, heretofore, though I have ever felt a tender sympathy for you from the time of our first meeting."

"I know you have, Sir Robert; all your conduct has evinced it; but you have been more wholly occupied with Edith, poor dear girl, who richly deserves all your love."

"This may be so, but henceforth, Clara, you will share my heart with Edith, dearly as I love her, for I have tried you well, and feel warmly drawn towards you."

"I need not say how much I thank you, Sir Robert, for speaking thus."

"It was a strange, but kind Providence, that brought you here, Clara," he continued, "and many a time have I thought of the singular chance in amazement."

"It was a blessed dispensation for me, dear Sir Robert, for now when I look back upon the life I lead, I tremble to see how lonely, deserted, and unprotected I was."

Sir Robert had always treated Clara with the utmost kindness and consideration, first for Edith's sake, and then, as he came to know her better, for herself alone. He had felt, as we have said, drawn towards her by certain traits of character and disposition that were constantly displaying themselves, and now in the present emergency, as he told her, he felt that he should have been quite unmanned, but for her kind sympathy. All this most sensibly affected Clara's feelings, who, although she might not heretofore have given any remarkable external signs of tenderness of heart, was in reality no less true and affectionate at heart, than Edith herself.

When Sir Robert kissed her now, and told her that she should ever share his heart and fortune with Edith and Walter, he did not see the quivering lips, nor the big tears that wet that lone child's cheek!

CHAPTER XL.

THE GAMING TABLE.

"Upon her face there was the tint of grief,
The settled shadow of an inward strife,
And an unquiet drooping of the eye,
As if its lid were charged with unshed tears."

Lord Amidown was at just that age and temperament at which despair would easily drive him to seek forgetfulness in the excitement of the wine cup or the gaming table, and it was not many weeks after the unhappy mental bereavement that Edith had experienced, before he might be seen almost nightly at the gaming table, often risking largely and losing with little apparent regret. It was a desperate resort at first, but soon grew to be with him, as with all others who indulge in the hazard of gaming, a passion beyond control, and beyond the reach of reason, only comparable to its sister habit and sin, drunkenness.

Only too much delighted to have gotten hold of so profitable a subject as Lord Amidown proved to be, the frequenters of the establishment where he resorted seemed to have a perfect understanding with each other that everything should be done within their power to render the game enticing to him, and thus he was often permitted to go away a heavy winner for a time, but on the following night he would not only lose, most likely all the money he had gained on the previous night, but perhaps as much more into the bargain. The desire of winning it back again would attract him to the tables once more, but only to lose largely.

His visits to Edith were of course discontinued now. It was too melancholy a sight for him to witness the state in which he always found her; she did not even know him the last time they met, a fact that seemed to touch him more nearly than anything before; and he told Walter then that he could not bear to meet her again in that state, that it harrowed up his feelings almost to a state of desperation to see so much beauty, gentleness and intellect, wrecked and ruined before him. From that day he seemed to give himself up more fully to the vice that was wearing upon him, and he became more reckless than ever.

Hearing of the course that Lord Amidown was pursuing, Sir Robert sought him more than once, and strove, by good advice, to persuade him to leave it off while he could yet do so without ruin; but he saw at once that the demon of play had already fascinated and bewildered the brain of his young and noble friend, and that he would not be content until he had lost everything left to him by his proud and rich old parent the Earl of Amidown.

THE MISTAKE OF A LIFE-TIME.

CHAPTER XL.—[CONTINUED.]

To Sir Robert's consternation, Lord Amidown came to him one night, not long after the period referred to, in order to borrow five hundred pounds, declaring honestly that the fickle goddess had seemed of late to have completely deserted him, but that he should be in luck again shortly, when he would return the sum. Of course Sir Robert let him have the money, but not without a sigh for his friend.

"Ah, my lord, I take pleasure in rendering you so trifling a favor, but if I could only persuade you to leave this evil and insidious habit, it would make me most rejoiced."

"I appreciate your kindness, Sir Robert," he said, after musing for a moment, thoughtfully; "but why would you have me cease to play? I am injuring no one but myself, and what have I left to care for?"

The tones of his voice were so deep and truthful as he said this, that Sir Robert almost shuddered as he realized the circumstances that had brought all this misery about. The guilt seemed alone upon his own head, and he said to himself as his young friend departed, "if any one has cause for wretchedness, surely that one is myself." And it did seem strange that, with so much unhappiness at heart, he was enabled to bear up so well as he did.

Perhaps no one in Sir Robert's household was so deeply grieved, if we except himself, as the good Mrs. Marlow, at Edith's singular and unhappy condition. She scarcely left her charge for one moment, day or night, and by the most tender solicitude and the most gentle and endearing manners, seemed by degrees to heal the wound that had so shocked her brain, and gradually to win her back to reason and a slight consciousness of things about her.

One day Mrs. Marlow had finished combing Edith's soft and luxuriant hair, and as she did so she sat down by her side and took her hand within her own. She thought that the gentle girl seemed to look more kindly and consciously upon her than usual; seizing with avidity upon the happy thought, Mrs. Marlow kissed her tenderly, and as she did so, dropped a tear upon Edith's hand which she held within her own. That token of feeling seemed to awaken her spirit; she gazed upon her hand, and then at her kind friend, and burst into a flood of tears!

"One touch of nature makes the whole world kin."

It was the first tear she had shed for months, the first relief her pent-up soul had found since the almost fatal hour of that strange revelation. With those purging tears, reason had come again!

"Sir Robert," said Mrs. Marlow, in a whisper, as she sought him alone in his study. "Ah! Sir Robert."

"Well, Mrs. Marlow, why do you seek me here, and look so full of some matter of importance?"

"O, Sir Robert, I have such good news to tell you," said the happy housekeeper, dashing her hand across her eyes to clear them of tears.

"Of whom?"

"Edith, Sir Robert."

"Of Edith. What is it?" he asked, eagerly, now that her name had been mentioned. "What about her? Does the doctor think that she is any better?"

"Better, Sir Robert! why she has been weeping like a child," said the excited housekeeper.

"Tears, do you say?" asked her master, rising quickly to his feet.

"Ay, she has been sheding tears, and profusely, too, Sir Robert."

"Then there is hope, indeed," he said. "Has she spoken since?"

"Not yet."

"How long since was this, Mrs. Marlow?" asked Sir Robert, musing.

"Nearly an hour, but I wanted to let her get a little composed before I came away to tell you, sir."

"That was very proper," he replied; "but let us go to her now."

"You will be very cautious, Sir Robert?" suggested the housekeeper, respectfully.

"O, yes, Mrs. Marlow; I have had one fearful lesson, and shall hardly be abrupt again very soon."

Sir Robert found that Edith was indeed changed, that the fearful look of imbecility was gone, and the former beauty and intelligence of her eyes again beamed forth from her sweet face.

"Edith, my child!" he almost whispered, as he approached her.

"*Father!*" she murmured low. O, how the word thrilled and echoed through his heart, as Edith threw her arms fondly about his neck, and kissed him.

She remembered all that had transpired at the time when the singular revelation had been made to her—but from the moment when she fully realized the import of Sir Robert's words, all was to her as a blank; she could recall nothing. With the utmost caution and consideration, matters were broken to her with judgment, and she was gradually informed of all that it would interest her to know, not even excepting the circumstances relating to Lord Amidown's unhappy propensity. It was acknowledged to her by Walter that her serious illness had doubtless led him to take the first step towards a sin that he afterwards followed for excitement and forgetfulness, until finally it had become a settled passion with him.

Edith of course felt keenly this misfortune to Lord Amidown, more particularly because she realized that she was herself the innocent cause. Walter conversed with her freely upon the subject, and informed her without reserve, of Lord Amidown's exact condition. To her appeals and excuses, Walter answered frankly that he considered him too absolutely affected by the fiendish passion ever again to reform, and that any farther effort on his or Sir Robert's part, would be wholly useless, inasmuch as both had exerted all their influence in this behalf already, to no purpose. But Edith, in her trusting and confident love, in her woman heart, thought differently; she believed that, though others had failed, yet she might perhaps influence and save him. She felt freer now than ever to act for him. She felt at liberty to do that for him now that she might not have done before, or even more, were he still blessed with friends and fortune.

As the forsaken, unknown orphan, the dependent on charity, Edith felt that she would have been comparatively powerless; under such circumstances she would not have presumed to seek Lord Amidown on any errand. But now, with a name and position, with unlimited means at her disposal, and while he too was almost a beggar, she felt a strange power and incentive within her to act independently and alone in his behalf. She realized a secret prompting at her heart, as though the purity of her love and devotion would conduct them both safely through this series of trial.

Thus animated and resolved, she showed outwardly even less regret and anguish concerning Lord Amidown than Sir Robert and Walter had expected to witness on her part. She had formed a resolution within her own breast to rescue him, and it gave her a bright and animated expression that her face had never worn until then. This they all noticed with no little surprise, and Clara said to Walter, one side, that Edith was handsome before, but now she was beautiful.

Walter had taken some pains to seek out Lord Amidown soon after Edith's recovery of her mental faculties, and to tell him of it. At first it quite unmanned him—he was like a child. He knew not what to say, or what to do, and Walter thought that perhaps he would return at once to seek the gentle and happy influence that he had so prized only a short time before. But he did not read the heart of the unhappy man aright; he could not see the contending emotions that actuated his breast at that moment, when he heard for the first time that Edith, whom he had so truly and tenderly loved, was once more in possession of her full power of intelligence.

His first impulse was to fly to her presence, but in an instant the fact of his present situation rose up before him—he was a beggar! What right had he to think of love? could he support a wife? where were his means? alas, she could only scorn me now, he thought; every one has forsaken me, and perhaps justly enough. My old friends cut me in the street, because they fear I shall stop them to borrow money of them. Lord Amidown sighed heavily as his heart drew the truthful picture. But, he thought, "I'll be more cautious. I will retire the moment I have won enough to honorably pay what I owe, and will strive to purify myself, that I may again become worthy of her dear love. O, no, no, I could not look upon her now, my eyes would fail me."

The truth was, that even the few months that Lord Amidown had indulged in gaming had been sufficient to quite exhaust his resources, and in his madness for play, he had mortgaged the very home of his ancesters, besides having thrown away as much gold as he could borrow from his friends and relations, all the while vainly hoping that fortune would turn by-and-by, and that he would regain all that he had so foolishly lost. In this plight, as he acknowledged to himself, his former friends began to avoid him, and he literally became a wanderer, not knowing where to lay his head, or even at times where he might obtain his next meal.

"His household gods were broken—he had no home."

So sudden a change from affluence to poverty was almost unprecedented, and some of his relations had hoped that when he had reached the bottom of the hill he would reform, and strive once more to ascend it; but all their earnest intercessions failed of producing any effect, except may-be, good resolutions, which his lordship was unable to keep.

Matters were in this melancholy condition when Edith and Walter sat one afternoon together in the drawing-room. They had been silent for some time, when at last she asked:

"Walter, can you tell me where I can see Lord Amidown?"

"I cannot at present tell you, Edith; he has left his former home, you know, and even his sister has removed to the house of some branch of the family."

"I know that, Walter, but is there not some place where I could see and speak with him for a few moments alone?"

"No, I think not, Edith; but you know how much pleasure it would give me to bear any message to him from you, and also to bring you back an answer."

"How can you communicate with him, Walter, if, as you say, he has no fixed residence, or spot where he may be found at certain periods?"

"I mean such a place as you could visit with propriety. It is different with me. I should take any message you entrusted to me directly to the gaming house in St. James street."

"Is that the one he frequents?"

"The only one I have ever heard of his visiting regularly," replied Walter.

"Is he always there at night?"

"Almost invariably, or at least I have always found him there when I desired to meet him."

"At what hour?"

"From ten till long past midnight, or most any hour before day break in the morning.

He will be sure to be there to-night, I know," said Walter.

"How do you know?"

"I have loaned him a hundred pounds—he promised me it should be the last he would ask for, and he said he wanted to try his luck only once more."

"*Once more*, alas! it is ever thus," said Edith, musing to herself, "and still once more."

"It is indeed ever thus," said Walter, "and I grieve for the loss of one like Lord Amidown."

"Not *lost*, Walter, he has only strayed; as yet it is night, but the day shall bring light with it."

"Heaven grant that you may be right, Edith; but I have seen all endeavors prove so useless upon him, that I cannot cherish the least hope. Why, Edith, did he not come to you at once after your illness?"

A slight flush overspread her face at this remark, but she answered promptly:

"There may be reasons for his conduct that neither you nor I can at present understand, Walter."

Walter had incontinently touched upon a tender subject in his last remark, one that had cost Edith more thought, perhaps, than any other portion of Lord Amidown's conduct. It did seem to her as though if he had loved her as she felt that she loved him, that he would have come to her at all hazards, and yet in her kindness and consideration she could imagine many reasons why in his sensitiveness he could not bring himself to come to Sir Robert's house. She could not blame him as others did, she remembered him too well as he had been, not as he was at that moment. In fact, Edith had realized the truth of the case just as Lord Amidown had been affected, and she at last no longer thought strange of him on this point.

Turning from Walter, she sought Mrs. Marlow, and was long closeted with the kind housekeeper.

The reader must come with us now from Sir Robert Brompton's house to a very different establishment.

It is again night in the great city. The masses have lain them down to sleep, but the restless tide of dissipation rushes on as swiftly as ever. Indeed it is high noon with the gambling hells at midnight. Night is turned into day with them, and day into night, and well chosen is their time, for dark deeds should be consummated in dark hours. What house is this that seems to rival all its neighbors for brilliancy even in elegant St. James street? Look well at the glitter and tinsel of its belongings; observe the character of those that wait, and listen to the sounds within. They are not boisterous, but significant. This is one of the famed hells of London, so appropriately named.

Pause for a moment, and observe the person of this young man just entering this den of vice; there is a shabby gentility about his thread-bare coat—a forlorn air. He seems sad and dejected, his cheek is pale, and his eyes are dilated like one under the influence of spirituous liquors; but his step is too steady for that, his excitement is of a mental, not a physical character. As he paid his entrance fee, and stepped into the gorgeously lighted rooms, where his features became more distinctly visible, the observer would have recognized him as Lord Amidown. He mused for some moments to himself, and walked busily among the tables without participating in the games of hazard that were going on, nor the invitations that were offered to him on all sides. At last, however, he met with a tall, dark man, whom he seemed at once to recognize, and to greet as though he had been seeking him on an appointment.

"Good evening, my lord," said he in black, extending a hand, as he greeted him.

"Good evening, sir," said Lord Amidown, carelessly, and with a vacant air.

"I see you are quite prompt, my lord, to your appointment."

"Yes," he answered, rousing himself a little. "I have come to get my revenge upon you to-night. Your luck has been all one way, but fortune must change at last, or I sadly mistake."

"She's a fickle goddess," said the other, truthfully, and yet with an expression of sarcasm upon his face,—"and you should place little reliance or confidence in her; but after all, it is very true, as you say, that she must change now and then, or else she would not merit her title of fickleness: so perhaps it may be your turn to-night."

"I have need enough of her smiles, and if

she ever is to dispense them to me, it should be this night," said Lord Amidown, with a sad expression of countenance.

"How much have you got, my lord?" asked his companion, coolly.

"How much have I got?" interrupted his lordship, in surprise.

"Excuse me, I meant to ask," said he in black, "at what figure you would commence?"

"Fifty will do to start with," said Lord Amidown, carelessly sitting down to the table opposite his companion.

"Fifty pounds, fifty pounds," repeated he in black, "rather a small figure, but as you say, my lord, it will do, perhaps, to commence with." As he said this, he laid a pile of bank notes by his own side from which he drew his stakes.

It was nearly midnight when they commenced to play. Lord Amidown of course did not wish to let his antagonist know the limited character of his resources, nor was he willing to stake all on a single game, though he commenced at a low figure, hoping gradually to win a handsome sum. He in black managed with the coolness and adroitness of a practised gamester; he lost at first at almost every stake, winning once in a while, just enough to keep up an apparent interest in the game. An observant witness would have marked with surprise the game he played: indeed he seemed to win or lose, just as he pleased. It was very plain, also, to any one not so much interested as Lord Amidown himself was in the game, that his antagonist was permitting him to win largely only as a decoy, and to tempt him in the end to greater losses than he might otherwise risk.

"My lord, you have extraordinary luck to-night, and are punishing me severely."

"It would take a month of such luck as this to refund to me my losses," he replied.

"You are in a fair way to make them up now, I should judge."

"Think you so?" said his lordship, smiling, as he drew another winning to his side.

"To be sure—there you are again: a thousand more. This is extraordinary," continued his antagonist, with well affected surprise, as he prepared to set another thousand.

The fact was, that Lord Amidown played honestly, while those who understand these matters know very well that the regular gambler cheats either sooner or later, making sure in that way to come off winner at the last. But he who played with Lord Amidown was no common man. He played and lost like a philosopher, and all the time with a sneer upon his lip, as though he scorned the employment in which he was engaged. And yet his design upon his companion was perfectly apparent, and now and then he seasoned the game with well-timed remarks, that only seemed more keenly to incite Lord Amidown to a deeper interest in the game before them. They had played now for some time in this manner, until his lordship had by an extraordinary run of luck won with the small amount with which he commenced, ten thousand pounds, and still they played on, a thousand at each stake. Of course it would have been next to impossible for him to have won to this extent, had not his antagonist purposely lost now and then for his own object.

"There is little use in this—it is no game at all. I have lost enough."

"You promised me my revenge," said his lordship, "and must play on."

"O, if you insist, of course I must go to the extent that I have about me," continued the other, with well affected complacency, and as though he still remained against his will.

"You will play, then?"

"O, yes," said the other.

A small crowd had now gathered about the table, as is the custom whenever the stakes played for are of a heavy amount, and some of Amidown's former friends, who stood near to him, did not hesitate to advise him to withdraw from the game with so snug a sum, and not risk it all again.

"Such luck can't follow you, Amidown, long," said one."

"Quit while your pocket is full," said another, in his ear.

"I'm in luck to-night," he said, smiling; "don't interrupt me now."

His singular partner was in no way disconcerted by the good luck that seemed to attach to his antagonist's play, but sat perfectly calm and self-possessed in his seat. He overheard the remarks addressed to his lordship, but made no answering reply, though a scornful expression wreathed itself about his expressive mouth. But he seemed evidently to

tire of the present state of things, and finally said:

"Come, my lord, this is quite an unpromising game; let us make a round stake of it, and close. Place ten thousand on the mark, and I will cover it for one game."

"Say five," said Lord Amidown, a little cautious, for he could not bear the idea of losing all he had won at one single chance, and it seemed to him that luck would change with him soon.

"No, ten is my game; you have won largely, and it is a fair offer."

"Very well," said Lord Amidown, overcome by the tempting hope that he might possibly double his winnings.

"Are you ready?" asked he in black.

"Yes," answered his lordship.

"It is your turn to throw first," he continued. "Go on, if you please."

Lord Amidown threw the dice and scored a high number, but not an unusual one, when his antagonist declared it, and prepared to play himself. The crowd gathered close about them, and seemed intent upon the chance that was about to be decided, and which related to the possession of so large a sum of money.

The dice rattled aloft and descended upon the table, showing the highest number that one cast of the instruments could score. But at the same moment a gloved hand from the crowd was laid upon the dice, and a voice said, in a low, but distinct and thrilling tone:

"These dice are loaded, my lord, and if I understand this game aright, he who is detected in cheating, and particularly in using loaded dice, forfeits the game. The money is therefore yours."

A dozen voices pronounced the dice to be loaded, as they were now passed from hand to hand, and also unhesitatingly declared that the money belonged to Lord Amidown by the rules of the game and the place. In the confusion that ensued, the money was pressed upon Lord Amidown by those about him, and he received it, though he felt half unwilling to do so, while his companion, with a face burning with passion, yet overcome by the sudden and indisputable evidence brought against him, frowned coolly upon them all.

"And who are you, who set up for umpire here?" he asked, turning angrily to him who had so fearlessly interfered in the game, and exposed his duplicity.

The person thus addressed was apparently a very young man, who had been so interested in observing the progress of the game, that he had not before looked him who now spoke in the face. He was dressed in a slouched cap and heavy cloak, and seemed by his manner to be a novice there; but thus addressed, he turned calmly towards the speaker, who exclaimed, as their glances met:

"Gracious God, do those eyes come from the grave to haunt me!"

As he spoke thus, he staggered back from the table where he had been at play, with averted face and trembling body. He was a man of rather more than ordinary stature, and perhaps a little past his prime, yet his figure showed that it had once been the seat of strength and manly grace. But now he was trembling before the presence of one who was, as compared to him, a mere stripling, and who seemed at this moment to be quite as ill at ease, though not so visibly affected, as himself. The exclamation which he had uttered so loud, startled nearly the whole company, who hastened to the spot to solve the mystery. It was no unusual thing for one to lay violent hands upon another, in the excitement induced by the character and occupation of those who frequented the gaming room; oftentimes deadly weapons were produced, and, sad to say, sometimes for the purpose of self-destruction, when some sanguine and deluded being lost his all. Those who now hurried to the spot where the scene we have described had occurred, looked to witness some such matter or casualty as those we have named, and crowded upon the gambler in black, until the physical effort to retain his feet seemed to arouse him, and also to awaken whatever there was of spirit left in his nature. He threw up his hand in a moment, when he realized the demand made upon him for physical effort, and throwing back his head, braced himself for the occasion.

"What's the matter now?" exclaimed a half dozen voices from the by-standers, who had noticed this surprise.

"Stand back—room, room, I say," exclaimed he in black, looking upon those about him with an eye in which the most desperate and daring will was expressed.

The young man to whom we have referred, also seemed strongly moved, but turning to Lord Amidown, whom he had just so opportunely befriended, he whispered something in his ear that caused his lordship to be scarcely less affected than his antagonist had been, and to hurry with his new companion at once towards the door, from whence the man in black had just made his escape.

"You are not going so quickly, are you, Amidown?" asked two or three, calling after him.

"Stay a while, Amidown," said another, "if only to introduce your friend."

"Hold on a bit, and let's have a time after this fun."

"Are you frightened, Amidown, that you cut so?" asked another, half-laughing as he said so.

"No, no, gentlemen, but—"

"O, hang your buts, we *want* you; so hold on, old boy."

"Another time," he said, evidently much embarrassed.

"'Twont do, now or never," said two or three, catching at his arms, and half-turning him round as they did so.

"Come, neighbor," said one, addressing Lord Amidown's companion, "join us in inducing his lordship to stop and explain."

But the young man thus addressed made no reply, while Amidown, half out of patience at the annoyance, seemed struggling to keep control of his temper.

"Excuse me, gentlemen, excuse me now," he said hurriedly, as he passed on with his companion a few steps in advance of those who were addressing him.

A few curious persons followed them even into the street on their way out, and saw them both enter a private carriage, in which they were driven rapidly away. But as the door was closed upon them, those nearest to the vehicle could distinctly notice upon its panels the *Brompton coat of arms!*

"That is Sir Robert Brompton's coach, ——— Square," said one."

"I know," said another, "the rich old fellow with the handsome daughters."

Some now called to mind the singular interest evinced in the game by the person who had afterwards shown so much influence over Lord Amidown, and the remarkable interference that had saved him such a heavy sum of money. Others alluded to the amazement of the stranger in black, when his eyes met those of his lordship's young friend. But no one attempted to explain any of these extraordinary circumstances in relation to the singular scene which had just occurred. All was clouded in mystery.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE PRODIGAL'S RETURN.

Then gently scan your brother man,
Still gentler sister woman,
Though they may gang a kenning wrang,
To step aside is human. BURNS.

In the meantime, the relationship between Walter and Clara had assumed no material change. She was still like a tender and loving sister to him, while Walter on his part was a most devoted lover to her, though his feelings were perhaps under considerable restraint. He remembered the promise he had made, and therefore did not again openly refer to the matter of his regard for her.—But it was not in reason that such a state of affairs should long continue; though Walter was withheld by his promise from making any decided advances, yet he might now and then gently hint or refer to the subject of his love for her, but however gently this was done, he was so pleasantly, yet adroitly, parried in his advance, that at last he began to realize the too frequent recoil of his own tenderness, and yet it was impossible for him to feel vexed at the treatment which he received from the kind-hearted and beautiful girl. Some persons can say us nay, and leave a fairer impression and better satisfaction than another who may grudgingly assent to our demands.

Having once shown Walter how much in earnest she was concerning the affection that he had professed for her, and the relationship that he had seriously proposed, Clara no longer gave way to tears or regrets, for there seemed to be a native philosophy of character about her that taught her to strive to be cheerful, let what might betide her, and let her feelings dictate what they could. Thus it was that even when her soul was the saddest within, still she dealt in

"Quilps and cranks, and wreathed smiles."

The poor girl felt that she had no claim upon the position that she held in Sir Robert's household, and that she had her own welcome to make and to sustain in that home, which chance had so kindly provided. Reasoning thus, she felt that it was her only true policy to make herself agreeable, not to cast a cloud all about her by her own melancholy and sorrow. Now that Edith had been acknowledged as the daughter of Sir Robert, and a plausible story given out to cover up the cause of her long estrangement, Clara felt more than ever the loneliness of her situation. True, Edith was, if possible, more kind and thoughtful of her than ever, but nothing could make her forget that she was there by charity and on sufferance; nothing could supply to her the want of the quiet confidence of birth and right.

"Dear Clara, you surely do not love me any the less because of the change that has come over my position, in relation to Sir Robert and this house, do you?"

"No, Edith," replied her companion, "I love you none the less; indeed I rejoice at your good fortune."

"But, Clara, I fear that you do not love me quite so well—I am jealous of your regard, because I have loved you ever since we have known each other, so dearly and truly."

"I know you have, Edith—I know you have, and you deserve all the good fortune that has fallen to your share," answered her companion, throwing her arms about Edith's neck and kissing her.

"You shall ever be my dear, dear sister, let what may happen," said Edith, returning her caresses.

In this state of affairs, Clara was still the star of Sir Robert's drawing-rooms, or rather she was the comet, while Edith was the star. For hers was that brilliant meteor-like genius and beauty, that startles and challenges astonishment as well as admiration, while Edith's charms, which most unquestionably exceeded those of Clara in fact, when balanced in the scale of true beauty and loveliness, were of the milder and star-like serenity that burneth steadily and gently in its sphere.—Clara was still the centre of attraction, and as pleasant as ever, while many a titled head bent low in homage to the power of her clear, witching eye, and the wit of her keenly tempered tongue.

When Walter Manning had first seen Edith as she stood in Sir Robert's house, on the night when they had rescued her from the fearful haunt in St. Giles, he thought he had never seen so sweet a face before; indeed he loved Edith, though she was then a child, as it were instinctively, and from day to day that love grew upon him, until the period when he became acquainted with Clara.—Edith's full reliance upon him, her sweetness of disposition, her beauty, and the mystery that enveloped her at that time, all had their weight, no doubt, in bringing about this result, and though Walter never told her so, yet he loved her, or thought that he did, better than he could ever love again.

But no sooner was Clara fairly introduced into Sir Robert's household, than she quietly and quite unintentionally supplanted Edith altogether in his heart, and assumed the throne of his affections in her own person.—Walter gradually confessed this rule, and he thought most truly now that he loved her, and perhaps he did, though he had felt the same before towards Edith. But the sequel of the story must show how his heart was finally affected.

Perhaps Walter was incited in no small degree in his devotion to Clara, by the extraordinary and universal homage that he saw her constantly receiving, for there is emulation even in love. Walter felt, too, some pride in sharing the confidence or intimacy of one at whose shrine so many, high in the aristocratic circles of the town, bent submissively. He felt, laying aside their titles, that he could otherwise show quite as good a claim to her hand as the best of them all, whether in the matter of intelligence or that of manly beauty, and it was a fact, that few persons visited Sir Robert's who could compare with our young East Indian in personal appearance.

But to Clara they were all alike; she treated them each with the same courtesy, having a kind word for this one, a sparkling repartee for another, a smile for a third, and perhaps a playful flirtation with a fourth, but encouragement as to the matter of regard, she gave to none. With her powers of discernment, she was quick to understand what strain of conversation and what spirit was best suited to this one or that, and she treated them accordingly. Thus cheerful and beautiful, still she seemed to the frequenters of Sir Robert's house either to have no heart at all to love, or else to have irrevocably made up her mind to share its tenderness with no one.

Colonel Freeman, of the Royal Hussars, was one of Clara's warmest admirers, and as he stood now a little removed from her side, while she chatted in her ever captivating yet unaffected manner with old Sir George Ramsay, the colonel turned to a friend by his side, and remarked, after a moment's pause:

"Hang me, Capt. Sidney, if that girl is not a perfect riddle to solve. Just observe how in earnest she is with that old fellow, Sir George Ramsay, while you and I stand here quite neglected."

"A riddle did you say? that's nothing odd; all women are riddles, colonel.'

"Yes, that may be true enough, but, zounds she is a perfect witch, and keeps up a running

fire here upon our hearts from one end of the line to the other, and yet shows not a single feather of a coquette."

"No," said the other, honestly, and somewhat thoughtfully, for he too was a warm admirer of Clara. "No, no, the girl is no coquette, that is certain."

"Do you think that she is in love?" asked the soldier, still regarding her.

"With whom, colonel?"

"Why, with any one."

"I have never seen any sign of it," said he, quizzing Clara as she still stood talking to Sir George Ramsay, opposite.

"This young Mr. Manning seems to be wheeling his columns after doing escort duty to no purpose for considerable time past," said the colonel.

"Yes, he's tacked ship sure enough, and is standing on some other course now. They say he had Miss Edith in chase for a while, till Lord Amidown cut him out."

"One would think," continued the colonel, "if personal looks weighed anything with a woman, he ought to have succeeded with Clara or Edith either. Egad, how finely that fellow would look well mounted and in full charge," added the soldier, with a bit of professional pride animating his features.

"Ay, ay, he's a clean craft, well trimmed and everything taut. Do you know, colonel, that once or twice I thought I detected a look of the quarter deck about him?"

"Hang the fellow, it's the girl that puzzles me," continued the other. "If the young East Indian made out so poorly, what hope is there for any of us?"

"True enough, if he couldn't succeed, who among us may hope to fare any better? That chap is far to windward of us, living here in the very house, and being able to take advantage of every cap full of wind that blows."

"And yet I think the girl loves him," mused the colonel, half to himself. "Why, captain, I have detected before now, glances from her blue eyes, that he did not see, and expressions upon her face while his was averted, that I would give my commission to be able to call up from the depths of her young heart."

"Why look ye, colonel, you'd better haul your wind, you are getting among the breakers here, and are shoaling your water fast.—Your only safety, man, lies in throwing everything aback at once."

"O, hang it, captain, I'm not ashamed to own it—I love the girl most desperately, there is no use in disguising it. I only wish she would give me a chance to declare myself."

"Good," said the captain, "I like that; show your colors and stick to them. Lay her alongside, colonel, and open your batteries; a chance shot may do the business—who knows?"

How long these two officers would have gone on thus talking upon this same subject, each after the style of his own profession, it is impossible to say, had not the subject of their remark herself approached them, and by a few happily conceived remarks, placed both of them at once in the very best and most cheerful of humors. Her quick ear had overheard some carelessly uttered remark between them, and having this cue, she easily guessed the rest of the matter. Of course, neither the soldier nor the sailor guessed this, but cheerfully acquiesced in the disposition of themselves by Clara, which placed them at different card tables in opposite parts of the room, where they took their seats, satisfied to help make up the several parties at whist, and in the interest of the game to forget all about love.

Having accomplished this little bit of generalship, as Colonel Freeman would have called it, or this capital bit of seamanship, as Captain Sidney would have expressed it, Clara went and seated herself opposite to Sir Robert Brompton as his partner, at which Sir Robert welcomed her with an honest smile of affection, and whispered to his next neighbor, Lord Hasgrove, that Clara was a dear good girl, the charm of his life.

Suddenly Sir Robert looked uneasily about him, and catching Clara's eye, asked her anxiously:

"Where is Edith?"

"Stepped up stairs for a moment, Sir Robert; she is not fond of cards, you know."

"Very true, I forgot," said Sir Robert, soon becoming interested in the game.

It might have been eleven o'clock, when Sir Robert asked this question, but as we have said, he was satisfied by Clara's remark, and it was after twelve before he again thought of the matter. When he did so, he seemed

a little puzzled, but thinking perhaps Edith was over fatigued and had lain down, if indeed she had not retired altogether, he said no more, though Clara saw that a shade of disappointment remained on his face until the company broke up.

As the company were leaving Sir Robert's house that night, a part of them met three persons just entering; this they would not have noted but for the oddity of persons arriving at so late an hour. They passed up and entered Sir Robert's library, when a servant was at once summoned and sent for Walter. As he entered, the utmost consternation was depicted in his countenance. There stood Lord Amidown, and his friend, who had now thrown off the slouched cap, showing the face of Edith! Behind her, stood good Mrs. Marlow, who had been her companion, and who awaited her in the carriage, while she performed her errand in the gaming house.

"Edith!" he exclaimed, in surprise, "what does this mean? My lord, you here?"

"Walter, it means simply this—that our mutual friend is without a home; will you be to him as you have so long been to me, a brother?"

"Edith, I understand you. My lord, there is my hand."

"A thousand thanks, Walter," said Edith, "and now his lordship will tell you anything that it is necessary for you to know. Sir Robert must not see me thus; indeed I blush to have been so bold even with you, Walter. But you understand me—I know you do."

"Hasten to your chamber, Edith, I hear Sir Robert coming; I will heed your wishes. Mrs. Marlow, let Edith pass out, and do you stand between her and the stairs as Sir Robert passes in."

The housekeeper did as desired, and in a moment after, Sir Robert came into the room, as much amazed at seeing Lord Amidown there as Walter had been.

"My lord!"

"Sir Robert!"

Were the greetings that passed between them, when a pause ensued, during which Sir Robert had an opportunity to examine his lordship, who presented a sad picture indeed.

In the short period of time during which he had been completely desperate, and utterly heedless of his fate, he had suffered severely, as well physically as mentally, and he sat there now with a pale and sunken cheek, with eyes bent upon the floor, and an humble mien altogether. Something very like a reproach was upon Sir Robert's tongue, but the picture of forlorn misery that he looked upon, completely disarmed him. He gazed upon him there but for a single moment, his heart was touched, and he said kindly but sorrowfully:

"My lord, you are sadly changed since you were last in this house."

"Indeed, indeed, I fear so," said Lord Amidown, raising his eyes and gathering courage by the kindness of Sir Robert's tone of voice. "But, ah! sir, perhaps repentance has not come too late."

"It is never too late to *reform*," said Sir Robert, with animation, and a change coming over his entire manner. "Excuse me, my lord, but I thought some other purpose had brought you here."

"To borrow money? Well, it is not singular that you should have thought so; but I trust a better purpose and a higher aim are the cause, my dear sir."

"If you are resolved to quit the gaming table and to respect yourself," said Sir Robert, warmly, "no one will offer you the hand of friendship sooner than myself."

"I do not deserve this kindness," said Lord Amidown, pressing the hand warmly that Sir Robert extended to him, "it but shows me the plainer my own folly."

"No more of this, no more of this," said Sir Robert. "What is that, Walter, that the good book says? 'There is more joy over one sinner that repenteth, than over—' what is it?"

"'—Ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance,'" said Walter, helping his patron to the text.

"Very good, that is it. But here—order wine and refreshments for his lordship; why he looks half famished," said Sir Robert, ringing the bell lustily as he spoke.

"You overpower me with your kindness, Sir Robert," said Lord Amidown, touched to the very heart.

It was not long before a partial explanation took place between Sir Robert and his lordship, who not being able to reveal how he had been induced to make this sudden and determined resolve, pretended to have been sum-

moned by Edith—of course, Sir Robert supposing this was done by a note. Having no home, no place to go to, he had presumed upon his old friend's hospitality, where he should be away from all temptation and among those he loved.

This was all very satisfactory to Sir Robert, who soon after left Walter and his lordship over a bottle of Madeira, in the supper room.

"Walter," said his lordship, "I have one favor to ask of you."

"Well, my lord."

"I have a sister, a dear forsaken, unhappy sister, who has used every means to reclaim me, until, guilty and debased as I have been, I dared no longer to see her. And at last, I have even feared in her contempt for my habits, she would refuse to see me. But if Edith will see me (how little I thought such a thing possible as for her to receive me), why should not my sister, bound to me by ties of blood?"

"She will forgive all, my lord, when she is once convinced of your reform."

"I hope so, Walter. Will you go to her and plead for me?"

"With all my heart."

"Immediately?"

"Ay, with to-morrow's sun."

"O, I thank you a thousand times for this kindness," he replied.

"You may tell her the truth, Walter, how very, very unhappy I was at the outset, and that, once steeped in crime, for I acknowledge it deserves the name, I had not the courage to turn back again and seek the path from which I had so widely strayed. But I will not dictate to you; use all your own judgment in my behalf, Walter, and though she may be offended and justly too, I trust you will make my peace for me."

"I will use my best endeavors to do so, my lord," said Walter.

"Once more, Walter, I thank you with all my heart," said his friend.

Neither Edith nor Lord Amidown could have slept that night without a mutual explanation having taken place, and by the management of Mrs. Marlow, Edith, having assumed her proper attire, met his lordship in the drawing-room. We need not draw a picture here of that scene that reviewed all of the past; we need not explain how contrite, how penitent and grateful his lordship was, nor how forgiving and gentle Edith was. No, no, it is better that we draw the veil over that meeting, and let the reader picture it in his own heart. Enough that they were happy.

When Edith knelt at last that night by her bed-side, how different was the tide that flowed through her heart, from that which had affected her when Clara, a few months before, had surprised her in prayer!

CHAPTER XLII.

THE THIRD CHOICE.

Alas! our young affections run to waste,
Or water but the desert. CHILDE HAROLD.

ACCORDING to his promise, Walter Manning on the following day sought Lord Amidown's sister at the residence of a noble relative, for she had now, alas, by her brother's improvidence, no house of her own. In his madness for play, her brother had not only sacrificed his own fortune, but also hers, of which he had been left the guardian by their deceased parent. This was very hard—it was most cruel, but yet Lady Josephine Amidown had never complained in a single word of her brother's treatment of her, though her pride was sorely wounded by the reverse that it had in this way caused to her. She had too much heart in such a dilemma, to grieve for anything else but for her brother, who had become, as it were, a monomaniac upon the subject of gaming, and was bringing shame upon himself and upon his father's honored name.

Her reproaches had been addressed to him during the earlier period of his extravagance and dissipation, in such gentleness as to have nearly broken his heart; but still he had played on, sadly hoping to win back at last what he had lost. Latterly her brother had become so poverty-stricken, so debased and humbled in his own estimation, and so loaded with reproach by every one, that he had even avoided her, his only remaining near relative. Indeed so isolated had he been as it regarded his friends, that she did not even know where she might find him, and there were always busybodies enough at hand to falsify her, and make him believe that she had disclaimed all relationship with him.

Without blaming her in the least for this, Lord Amidown could yet hardly believe these stories of her disowning him altogether, and yet when he reviewed his late conduct, he felt so debased and degraded that he hardly dared to meet her, surrounded, as he knew she must be, by those who were ready to heap reproaches upon him for his late dissolute and reckless habits. He realized only too bitterly the unfaithful manner in which he had discharged the trust as to her property, and that he had been little better than a thief in the manner in which he had taken it from her. Therefore it was that he desired to send Walter, as we have seen, to explain and intercede for him.

What was Walter's surprise, on meeting the lady, to recognize in her one to whom he had done a most important service but a few years before, in the park. It was at a time when

Lady Josephine, then almost a child, was driving with her mother in Hyde Park—the horses, startled at some accidental noise, sprang forward, tossing off the driver from his seat, and dashing off at a fearful speed with the mother and daughter, seated alone in the open barouche. By a most fortunate and energetic effort, Walter had succeeded, at the imminent risk of his life, in stopping the vehicle and helping the ladies out in safety, for which services he received the grateful thanks of both mother and daughter. That daughter was the Lady Josephine.

"I think we have met before," said the lady, as he introduced himself to her.

"We have, lady, but where, I cannot say; it was in England, of course?"

"Yes, in the park, some years since, when you stopped our horses, as they were running away with my mother and myself. We never knew who you were, or we should have tendered you more formal thanks."

"I remember well the occasion, now you refer to it," replied Walter. "I knew not the names of those I had the good fortune to assist at the time, but rejoice that it should happen to be the sister of my friend."

"Do you mean my brother?" asked Lady Josephine, with a sad voice.

"Yes, lady."

"Ah, sir, he is very unhappy now; if you know him, I need not say any more."

"I come to bring you news of him," said Walter, "most cheering news."

"Indeed; it is a long time since I have seen or heard directly from him. I pray you will proceed."

Then Walter, after a few preliminary remarks, told her how her brother had loved the beautiful Edith Brompton, and explained to her the check that a strange misfortune had given to that affection, in the delirium that had afflicted Edith for months, and which, it was thought at the time, would never leave her. He showed her how naturally such a state of things had at last driven her brother to seek for excitement and forgetfulness in play, and, that once deluded and seduced by the winning game of chance, he had gone on, from step to step, unwittingly, until it was too late to turn back, all the while being impelled by the hope of once more winning back the heavy amount that he had lost. Walter was eloquent, for he deeply realized his subject, and the lady followed him with a most absorbed interest, as he finally related to her how quickly he had responded to the call of love and duty, urged in person by the devoted Edith.

All this was news to Lady Josephine—she had never until this moment heard one word of her brother's love, or disappointment. His sensitive mind was of such a character that he could not have revealed his feelings regarding the object of his affection even to his sister; besides which, she did not move in a circle of society that brought her where she would be likely to hear the gossip that the world promulgated concerning her brother and Edith. She told Walter that had she known all this, much astonishment and even a degree of regret would have been spared to her own breast—for she would then have seen that her brother was rather forced by circumstances into his unfortunate career, and that he had not assumed it a willing victim, from any natural depravity or love of such practices.

"Henry should have told me of these things," she said, thoughtfully, "and I could have offered him consolation, at least—he surely might have let me known of his wounded spirits."

"And yet, lady," said Walter, looking into her spirited black eyes, "you can easily make allowance for the delicacy that caused him to withhold these matters even from you."

"True, Mr. Manning," she answered, quickly. "I know my brother's sensitive disposition, and you speak like one who knows him also, in thus excusing him on such grounds."

"For two years past," said Walter, "we have been frequently together."

"Did I understand you, that you reside in the same house with the Bromptons?" asked Lady Josephine.

"That is my home."

"And consequently you must know the lady whom Henry loves, as well as he does himself?"

"I know her, lady, as though she were my own sister," said Walter.

"I trust you will not consider me inquisitive," said the Lady Josephine.

"By no means."

"May I ask you, then, the general disposi-

tion and character of one who has gained such influence over my brother?" asked the lady, with a heightened color, at the liberty which she took.

"Most certainly," replied Walter, frankly; "and it will afford me pleasure to answer you honestly."

Walter then spoke of Edith Brompton as one only could who knew her as well as himself. He did not dwell upon her beauty, though his feelings prompted him to do it ample justice; but her sweetness of disposition, her retiring grace and loveliness of deportment, the native delicacy of her mind, her intellect, cultivation, and taste—all these he depicted in most eloquent terms to Lord Amidown's sister. He was incited to speak the more minutely and fully, as he observed the marked interest that the Lady Josephine evinced in all that related to Edith.

"Why, Mr. Manning," said she, as he closed, "you eulogize the lady in such flattering terms that one would count you the lover, rather than my brother Henry."

"I beg your pardon, lady, if I have appeared prejudiced too strongly in her favor; but one cannot speak with indifference of such a person as we have referred to. You will find Edith to be all I have described."

"You rejoice me much, Mr. Manning, by the picture that you have drawn," she replied, sincerely, "and it delights me to know that my brother's choice has fallen upon so worthy and pleasing an object."

"I am sure you will love her as soon as you meet," answered Walter.

"Mr. Manning, I trust you will excuse me still farther, if—"

The lady hesitated, as though she had been led to ask a question that had suggested itself without sufficient thought as to its propriety, and after it was half put, checked herself as she realized its character.

"I will thank you, madam, to lay aside all ceremony with me," said Walter, observing her embarrassment, "and consider the fact that I come from your brother to be a sufficient guarantee of my respectful duty."

"I was about to ask you, Mr. Manning, in my natural interest for a family in which my brother is, and has been so intimate, what relationship you bear to Sir Robert Brompton?"

"None at all, by blood, lady; and yet very nearly allied by the warmest ties of friendship. We met in the East Indies, where it was in my power to serve Sir Robert professionally. We were cast away together at sea, and amidst a singular combination of vicissitudes we became friends. With a princely fortune, Sir Robert couples a spirit of unbounded generosity, and as I was an orphan, and striving for a position in life, he generously adopted me, and has ever treated me through my collegiate studies and pursuit of the law, as though I were indeed and truly his own son. You would like Sir Robert, too, lady, for under a rough exterior, he hides a heart so kind, a spirit so generous, and a character so truly noble, that he must be known to be appreciated."

"Your history is a remarkable one, Mr. Manning," said the lady. "Did your parents die abroad?"

"My father was governor of the eastern division of India, at the time when a singular accident befell him—one which deprived both him and my mother of life," answered Walter.

"By violence, Mr. Manning?" asked the lady, evidently much interested in anything relating to him before her.

"Yes, lady, by the attack of an anaconda, in the jungle," he answered.

"An anaconda!" repeated the lady Josephine, in amazement.

"A story which I will relate to you at some future time, if you desire it," said Walter, throwing out a hint that might serve for a continuance of their acquaintance, so auspiciously begun.

"Nothing could interest me more than to have you do so," said the lady. "You seem to have passed a very eventful life for one so young as you are, Mr. Manning."

"Somewhat so," replied Walter.

After a few moments' pause, he rose to go, and as he did so, said:

"I am the happy bearer, I believe, of your forgiveness to his lordship, your brother."

"Certainly. Tell him, if you please, Mr. Manning, that I shall await him impatiently, and that he is the same to me as ever. There are but two of us left, and surely we should be all that brother and sister can be to each other."

Walter bowed low, and was about to turn from the apartment.

"It will give me pleasure to meet you at any time, Mr. Manning," said the lady, frankly, "and to fully acknowledge the indebtedness I am under to you in my brother's behalf."

"Thank you, lady, I shall do myself the honor to call," said Walter, with a pleasure expressed in his countenance that the lady could hardly have mistaken.

The fact was that Walter was at once smitten with the person and engaging manner of Lord Amidown's sister. It was not her personal beauty, though that was by no means of an ordinary character, but it was the peculiar manner, *distingue* in every respect, and the polished air of the high-bred lady, that captivated him. The confidence and dignified self-possession that birth and rank impart, were most conspicuous in Josephine Amidown, mingled with a soft and lady-like expression and bearing, that struck the observer at once.

Walter had been but little accustomed to female society. Indeed the extent of his circle was scarcely beyond Edith and Clara's society, with a few of their more intimate friends. True, both Edith and Clara lacked the high-bred manner that was so natural and conspicuous in Lord Amidown's sister, but yet after all, they evinced an unassuming modesty of deportment, scarcely less striking even with Walter. He made this very comparison in his own mind, but he had already lost his heart.

Clara's apparent coldness had effectually weaned him from her side, at least as far as love was concerned, but never was a brother more assiduous in his attention and regard, than was Walter still to both Edith and Clara. Maybe it was ficklness in Walter Manning, thus to transfer his regard; still, if he was sincere, it was none the less true and honest for its impromptu character. A man rarely marries his first choice; he gains experience by the very intercourse thus induced, and chooses at last, as a matter of course, with more circumspection, and perhaps with better prospect of after happiness.

On the part of the lady it must be admitted that, in the first place, the very agreeable business on which he had come to her, that of announcing her brother's reform, had gone far towards creating a warm interest in Walter at the outset. Then there was the memory of his important service rendered years before in the Park, added to which were the influence of his remarkable beauty of form and feature, his easy, gentlemanly address,and the romance that at once attached itself to his character after the conversation that Lady Josephine had enjoyed with him; all combined, served to render the gentle lady warmly interested in him at once.

Walter was a shrewd observer of human nature, and could read the face as well as many an older physiognomist, and he realized fully, to say the least of it, that he had created a sensation in the lady's breast. Not that he plumed himself at all upon this, but that it made him most happy to realize the fact.—When he had returned home and told the result of his visit to Lord Amidown, he thought that Edith would be the first one to ask him concerning the lady, whom they knew he had just been to visit in his lordship's behalf. But Walter was mistaken; it was not Edith who asked him of the result of the visit, but Clara herself.

"Did you see Lord Amidown's sister this morning, Walter?"

"I did, Clara," he said, while his face expressed the joy that he had realized there.

"And what kind of a lady is she, Walter How did she impress you?"

"Clara, she is most lovely," said Walter, honestly.

"Did she receive you kindly?" continued the fair girl.

"Most kindly, Clara, and bade me come again," he replied.

"I am glad of that," said Clara, thoughtfully; "you will go of course, Walter, wont you?"

"Why, yes, I presume so," replied Walter, smiling at her earnestness.

"Did Walter lose his heart this morning?" asked Edith.

"Yes," said Clara, "I believe he does plead guilty."

"Not a bit of it. I haven't said one word, I assure you, Edith."

The quick witted Clara saw by the expression of his face, that Walter had been strongly impressed with the lady, and so she said

she was glad of it, but only for his sake, not for her own. But Walter did not understand the working of her heart; he took her at her word, and really believed that she was glad, without a qualification, and that perhaps she was pleased to be rid entirely of the importunities that he had pressed upon her. Ah! Walter, you never knew the full wealth of Clara's heart, or the devoted tenderness that dwelt there. That heart was really yours already, and had it been one iota less true to itself and its love, it would have been yours in all respects! But, as it was, even in her love for Walter, she rejoiced to see him thus affected towards such a person as the lady Josephine, for she loved Walter too well and too sincerely to be selfish in her affection. Her own delicacy and truth would not permit her to indulge her love for him openly, and she had religiously adopted such a line of conduct as should cool his ardor for her, and which had succeeded exactly as she had wished to have it. And yet all the while she was sacrificing her own heart.

She showed none of the inward grief that she experienced, either to Walter or to any one else, but suppressed all outward token of this as she had done of her love for him.—Outwardly she was just as merry and cheerful as before, striving to contribute to his pleasure and the happiness of every one about her, while her midnight pillow, alas! was often wet with tears, sad scalding tears, in repentance for her youthful indiscretion!

"Walter, you saw Josephine?" asked Lord Amidown, eagerly.

"Yes."

"And explained for me?"

"Yes."

"What did she say, Walter? I know by your countenance what she said; I need not ask you," said his lordship.

"She told me to bear her forgiveness to you, and tell you that she should await your coming impatiently."

"And forgive me all?"

"Ay, everything."

Lorn Amidown heard Walter's report, and was within the next hour in his sister's arms. After a full and happy explanation upon other matters, she learned from him who Walter was, and many particulars about him and Sir Robert's household. To be sure, Lord Amidown drew Walter's picture with a partial hand, but the lady saw it through eyes that were equally prepossessed in his favor, and Walter Manning, had he exactly understood the case, could hardly have desired to stand better than he already did in the estimation of the beautiful lady Josephine Amidown.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE BLOODLESS MURDER.

If it were done, when 'tis done, then 'twere well
It were done quickly. MACBETH.

IF any one had followed the man in black who had been playing with Lord Amidown at the time when he was so signally rescued from the fraud that was attempted upon him, he would have found, that, after threading the many streets and lanes that intervened between St. James street and the quarters of the famed fortune-teller, Madame Duval, he entered the door of the building with the air of one who was quite at home, and that he breathed more freely, as though he had feared all the while that he might have been pursued, or watched by some curious witness of the late scene.

Passing in through the outer hall and anteroom, he walked at once into the apartment where Sir Robert Brompton and his party had consulted the presiding genius of the place.—The room was dimly lighted now, and looked if possible more gloomy and dismal than it had done when the reader was here before.—Throwing himself upon a side couch, he cast off the hat he wore, and brushed back the hair from his throbbing temples, discovering the face of Karl Blasius! The robber, the pirate, the house-breaker, the gambler, and the fortune-teller—for all these he had personated in our varied plot, though as yet all knew him not in these combined characters.

Edith knew him when he turned his face upon her as she seized the dice, though he did not penetrate her singular disguise; she recognized him in a moment as Bill the Bold. Sir Robert had known him, as we have seen, as robber, pirate, and gambler, but he suspected not the fortune-teller, who knew so much of his private business, to be he whom he had first met as a traveller at the little inn of Mornentz, in the valley of the Rhine. But thus it was, and there now sat with wrinkled face and frowning brow, the deep-dyed villain who has acted so prominent a part in the thread of our story, one to whom vice had become a second nature.

"How strange it was," mused he, aloud, "that interference, and by a mere stripling, too! I doubt much but I should have felled him on the spot, but for those eyes!—ah! those eyes! how strange that I cannot shake off their influence. Never, save in Edith and Clara, have I met them since I parted with *her*." As the robber spoke thus, he covered his face within his hands, and seemed lost in the past.

At last he seemed to arouse himself from the thoughts that absorbed him.

"But this young Lord Amidown—I'll remember him, and have my revenge yet. He has paid me well, however, and I count two-thirds of his estate already, in bags of gold.—

He will be back, if only for an explanation, when I can easily pacify him. The love of play is too deeply rooted in him to be easily overcome. But who could the owner of those eyes be?" That was strange, very, very strange. I should know them were I on the rack."

It was quite late now, and no noise gave token of any one being near; he turned the key of the door, and approaching a panel in the wall, nearly behind the spot where the chair stood which he occupied in the character of the fortune-teller, he pushed aside the panel and unlocked a door that opened into an oven-shaped cavity, packed as full of leathern and cloth bags of some ten inches high, by four to six wide, as it could hold. These he removed from the hole one by one, and took account of the labelled value on each. The amount must have been very great.

At last, when he had finished, and added up the sums into one grand total, he looked from his paper to the bags, and from the bags back again, and throwing himself back into a seat, surveyed the collected treasure. There seemed to be a struggle of feelings in his heart; at one moment his countenance would express the miser's glow of satisfaction at beholding his secret treasure, and in the next a contemptuous curl of the lip seemed to say, "what do I care for all this? what good can it do me, with my feelings, and my taste?" and this was indeed the thought that moved him now. All this golden treasure that had been gained by such outlay of mental and physical labor, by the cunning trade which he had adopted and so successfully carried on, and by the wily tricks of the gamester; what did it all amount to, now that he possessed it? Why, the paper in his hand told the story; it amounted to *figures*, to a given amount—nothing more.—He could reap no benefit from it; it could do him no good. All he could enjoy, or all he wanted after the excesses he had participated in, could be procured for a very small sum.

"Strange that after all the vicissitudes of my unhappy life, I should come to be a miser, for surely I love to think this gold is mine—did I say mine? yes, by possession, if not by right! And I like to take it out of its hiding place and count it over and over again. Why surely, Karl Blasius, who has been almost everything else, is now a miser!"

At this moment a noise was heard in the ante-room, and soon after a knocking at the door of the room, by some person who sought to obtain an entrance. The bags were silently, but quickly, replaced, the door once more locked and the panel closed, when the robber approached the entrance of the room, and unlocked it. As he did so, a man half-walked and half-staggered into the room, and threw himself upon a seat, quite as much at home as the first comer.

The man was rough and weather-beaten in the expression of his face, with heavy eyebrows and coarse, vulgar lips. He had evidently been drinking hard, and was almost too drunk to walk.

"You are drunk again," said the robber, looking at him with contempt. "Hardhead, you are a fool to get in this condition so often. You will expose yourself sometime by this means."

The robber addressed him thus, good naturedly, but rather reproachfully. It was indeed our old acquaintance of the tap-rooms, Hardhead, who personated for the fortune-teller the character of the Nubian slave, as well as assisted him in various other matters that required his aid and cunning to consummate.—He seemed to be more than usually intoxicated to-night, and to have been prompted by a spirit of bravado or independence.

"Look here, Bill," said he, "you pay me pretty well for this business, but it strikes me that I do the hardest part of it, and I want to go partnerships, and share equal."

"Hallo! here's rebellion. Why, Hardhead, I have been the making of you; took you when you were just about starving, and gave you a good round salary, just for old acquaintance sake."

"O, gammon."

"But is it not so?" said the robber, trying to soothe the drunken obstinacy of Hardhead.

"Gammon, gammon," repeated the other, with his finger at his nose.

"I tell you it is the truth, Hardhead," said the robber, lighting a pipe to smoke as he said so.

"Bill, didn't I hear you jingling bags of gold while I was at the door there, and haven't I heard you doin' the same thing a number of times, and don't I know you've got a pile stowed away snugly, out of all these sums that

you're allers a getin' from the visiters? O, I I knows all about it."

"Well, you silly fellow, 'sposing I have saved a little, what then?"

"Why, I want half, that's what I do," said Hardhead.

"Half?" repeated the robber, derisively; "I think I heard you say *half*."

"And I must have it, too, or I shall peach, that's all."

"Do what?" said the robber, quickly.

"Peach."

"Betray me, do you mean?" he continued, earnestly, with his eyes bent on Hardhead.

"Unless you poney over half the blunt, I shall block your game."

"Do you remember our oath, the binding promise we exchanged?"

"O, gammon," said the other.

The robber had put out his pipe as Hardhead went on, and he now sat regarding him with an expression of a demoniacal character. The whole expression of his countenance had undergone the most marked change, though his voice indicated no peculiar change in his feelings, yet he seemed to be weighing in his mind some matter of a startling character.—He addressed Hardhead and told him that he had better retire for the night, as it was already nearly half-past two. The half-drunken man seemed to be himself inclined to do so, and observing that he wanted Bill, as he called him, to get all ready to hand over the blunt in the morning, he staggered to his room, which led out of the one they were in.

The robber closed the door after Hardhead, and then turned and walked his apartment with a thoughtful brow. He was thinking of what Hardhead had said, and how completely he was in his power!

"If the villain should breathe but a single word to the police, there is an end to everything; my time would be up, and nothing could save me. I have marked a growing disposition in him to play the master, or equal at least, for some time past, and now a little liquor brings him out in his true colors. It is strange that I have not before thought how completely I am in his power."

As he thought these matters over, he paused and listened before the door where Hardhead had so lately entered. All was still, ave the hard breathing of the sleeper, ≥ho was wrapped in deep insensibility, deeper from the effects of liquor than the ordinary course of nature would have created. Listening for a moment, the robber turned away again, and continued his troubled and anxious walk to and fro in the mystic reception room. It was very dark and dreary there; the grim idols looked in the darkness as though they were laughing at each other, and the Chinese characters upon the wall had assumed the shape of Lilliputians, and seemed a miniature army walking on the wall. The skull on the table in the corner, seemed suddenly endowed with life, and to peer forth from its hollow eyes with strange fire.

All this appeared to the deluded eyes of the robber, whose thoughts were of a character doubtless to startle even himself. Perhaps in all that man's fearful life of crime, he had never yet committed a murder in cold blood; he had never crept upon a man in the dark, nor struck him the fatal blow while sleeping; but when he had shed blood, it was when his own was heated, when the clashing of swords was ringing in his ears, and his own life was likely at any moment to pay the same forfeit as that of his opponent. When he had dealt the death blow, it had been in open battle, or perhaps at times in self-defence, but he had never yet been an assassin.

It was evident now to his mind that so long as Hardhead lived, his own life was not worth a straw. He was liable at any moment to be seized by the police, and being denounced by him, to be condemned and executed. How then could he permit him to live longer? It was very evident that the man heeded not the mutual oath they had taken. If he disregarded it when in the state he was in to-night, so he might do at another time, or he might be in that condition in some place where it would be equally fatal to the pretended fortune-teller for him to speak out. Realizing these things, the robber said to himself that it was not safe to have Hardhead go from that room alive.

If he killed him, how could he dispose of the body? Thinking over this matter, he walked before the door of Hardhead's chamber many times Was there no way to do this so as to leave no trace of the murder behind, to betray that he had died by violence? He thought of poisons, but all that he knew of,

might be detected by dissection of the body after death. They would not do. Taking a candle he looked among the rubbish and shelves of a closet of the room, where he sometimes prepared some chemical agents to produce certain effects before the eyes, or with which to assail the senses of those who came consult him as the fortune-teller.

Stumbling against a small furnace in which he was accustomed to build the fire for the chemical purposes referred to, an idea seemed to strike him at once, which he prepared to put in execution.

Filling the little furnace with charcoal, he placed a few bits of folded paper and combustible matter underneath, and took it to Hardhead's door. All was still; he opened it and went in. It was a small room, with indifferent accommodations, but very snug; not a breath of air could get in, save from a small window, which was now tightly closed and fastened. The robber placed the furnace near the head of the bed where Hardhead lay in his drunken slumber, and lighting the paper beneath it, he paused long enough to see it fairly ignited, then withdrew from the room, taking the key with him and locking the door on the outside!

The robber then retired to his own sleeping apartment, which led from the same room nearly opposite to Hardhead's door. He did not undress himself, but pouring out a glass of spirit, tossed it off clear without water, and throwing himself upon the outside of a dirty-looking bed, fell into an uneasy sleep. Twice he started to his feet and looked about him, as though he dreamed that he was attacked by some one. The second time that he awoke thus, he walked over and listened at Hardhead's room. It was already broad daylight, but how still it was in there! Not even the breathing could be heard now. The robber almost shuddered as he went back to his bed to strive and obtain a few moments more of troubled sleep.

At last he rose, and making a hasty toilet, quietly put the key into the door of Hardhead's room, and after listening long and anxiously, turncd the lock and opened it. At first he staggered back with the gust of noxious gas that fumed into his lungs and nostrils, but with great presence of mind, he pressed in and threw open the window, soon clearing the room of the fatal vapor of the charcoal. On the bed lay Hardhead, just as he had lain himself down on retiring. Not a limb was discomposed, not a feature changed, but the breath was gone!

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE ARREST.

All is not lost—the unconquerable will
And courage never to submit or yield. MILTON.

THE robber took immediate steps to have Hardhead's body conveyed away from his premises, and in order to do this without having suspicion attach itself to him as to the matter of his death, he applied at once to the nearest police station for a permit and assistance to have the corpse taken to the dead house. He signed the usual certificates, and swore to the statement that the deceased was a servant much given to intemperance, and that he had retired on the previous night in a state of intoxication—and on calling him, and finding that he did not answer, as usual, he had entered his room and found him insensible, and that he had apparently died in a fit.

He paid the necessary fee established for such purposes, and persons were at once sent to remove Hardhead's body, the robber's mind being thus greatly relieved from the perplexity that the business had cost him.

The reader, who now knows in the fortune-teller, not only the person of the Robber of the Rhine Valley, but also the various characters which he has personated in our story, will realize some points with a little prompting, that may heretofore have looked perhaps singular. We have labored to show how strangely Karl Blasius was affected by the love that possessed him for the Lady Gustine. It had rendered him almost insane, and the resemblance of Clara to her he had thus loved, had led him to keep her as a prisoner near him, and it was the singular resemblance also of Edith to the Lady Gustine that had so infatuated him in relation to her. It was this that first attracted him towards her in Mother Giles's tap-room, and that afterwards led him to steal her away from Sir Robert, though revenge had also somewhat to do with that matter after the robber found whose house he was in, for he remembered the discomfiture he had received at Sir Robert's hands in the matter when he rescued Edith from the tap-room.

The same feelings that had drawn him towards Edith and Clara heretofore, seemed still to move him, and to one who could analyze his mind, it was very evident that he was crazy upon this one point, that a monomania had taken complete hold upon his mind touching the memory of her face. There is a peculiar eye that is not often seen, but when met with, is most frequently blue, large in development, and with a plaintive, witching power, that seems almost involuntary, but at the same time is most potent. One may not meet such eyes but once in a life. Of this class and peculiarity were the eyes of the Lady Gustine. Edith and Clara's were the same, and it was thus that the robber still felt a longing desire to gaze upon them, and even now planned how he might see them once more. The passion, as we have said, amounted with him to a delirium.

As the fortune-teller, neither Sir Robert nor any of the family had yet recognized the true character of him who had seemed to know so much of their private affairs. Indeed Sir Robert had more than once resolved, since he had openly explained the matter to Lord Ami down, to again visit the fortune-teller, and satisfy himself how it was possible for this individual to possess a knowledge of his early affairs relative to his child, for it was a broad hint relating to those matters that had so confounded and disturbed him on his first visit to her rooms.

Sir Robert was so thoroughly convinced that the fortune-teller knew nothing through any superhuman means, that he felt satisfied of his having individual information from some source that it was for his interest to fathom and control. He would not for half his fortune be exposed in the delicate matter relative to his child's loss among the very lowest class of the community, and he knew, too, that he had but indifferently possessed himself of all the particulars of her childhood while lost to him, and if this person could inform him of even these events alone, it was of sufficient interest for him again to consult her. As the denouement touching her right by birth had transpired, Sir Robert no longer felt the delicacy touching the matter that he had done before, though he earnestly desired still to keep all knowledge of the matter confined to his own family circle.

It was on the afternoon of the day which opens this chapter, that Sir Robert, actuated by these feelings, sought the house of the fortune-teller, when, having sent up his card, he was admitted in due form, but not this time by the Nubian. Hardhead, who had personated this character heretofore, was gone now, where, the robber could best say, but a plain white servant ushered Sir Robert into the mystic room. Everything was as he had seen it there before—the wax lights burned dimly, and the incense rose gracefully from the table where it was placed, while the light of day but dimly penetrated the heavy hanging curtains of the windows.

"What brings Sir Robert Brompton again to seek audience in this place?" asked the disguised robber.

"When I was last here," said Sir Robert, "you referred to a matter that convinced me, not of your power as to magic or superhuman knowledge, but that by some strange fortune you had become possessed of information nearly concerning me. The object of this visit is to come to a perfect understanding with you upon this subject."

"You seem less sensitive than you were when last here; how have matters changed to affect you thus?"

"You know so much of my affairs already by some strange means, that I may tell you in this connection that the secret of Edith's relationship has necessarily been divulged."

"To Lord Amidown?"

"Yes."

"I anticipated this, and told him in this room that pride would snap the silken tie that bound him there, but that it would be joined again; for I knew that when you saw so much at stake, you would risk all else to make her you loved so well, happy. Did I not judge rightly?"

"You did indeed, and must have known my family affairs well to have reasoned thus," replied Sir Robert.

"I have known them intimately, Sir Robert, ever since Edith's return to your house after a year's absence!"

"Indeed," said Sir Robert, in surprise, "this is very strange—what motive could possibly have led you to keep such a constant watch upon my domestic affairs? What interest have you in them?"

"It is a long story, Sir Robert, and one which I am not inclined to divulge at present; but at some other time, perhaps, a full understanding will be well on the part of both of us."

"But I have come expressly for the purpose at this time, and will remunerate you well for your trouble."

"Money is of little object to me, at present," said the pretended fortune-teller; "I am not prepared to accede to your wishes now. At another time I may seek an interview myself for the purpose."

Sir Robert mused to himself for some minutes, evidently disappointed at the turn the interview had taken, when suddenly a loud knocking was heard at the door below, and soon after the heavy tread of several persons upon the stairs announced that a party was approaching the room for some purpose.

At first, the pretended fortune-teller seemed to be evidently disconcerted, but long practice had rendered the robber very perfect at dissimulation, and he appeared once more to be quite at home, and unconcerned, though those who approached so unceremoniously were already at the door of the room where Sir Robert and the ex-robber were together. All doubt as to the character of the new comers was at once put to rest by some four or five men wearing the police uniform filing into the room, and stationing themselves before the door, while he who seemed to be the leader of the party, advanced and addressed the robber:

"You are known by the name of Madame Duval, are you not?"

"I am."

"Then you will throw off that toggery, and come along with me."

"What!"

"Lay by your disguise, and come with us at once," replied the officer.

"There is some mistake here."

"None at all."

"You come to arrest me?"

"We do."

"On whose complaint?"

"That I know not."

"With what am I charged?"

"Nor that either do I know. We obey orders, and ask no questions."

"Will you not retire, and give me a few moments to prepare myself?"

"Not a step do we go until you go with us. We don't lose sight of you, O no!"

The robber saw that he was caught, but he could not fathom the business—nor could he tell upon what charge he was arrested. He demanded to see the warrant; the officer showed it, and then he could only read his assumed name—but there was no cause specified; it was all a mystery to him.

"Come," said the officer, "if you don't take those clothes off, I shall help you;" and as he spoke he laid his hand upon the person of the ex-robber, as though to remove the flowing gown in which he was dressed.

"Fool," answered the pretended fortune-teller, dashing the officer to the ground with one stroke of his arm.

This was the signal for a general melee, during which the fortune-teller was not only secured, but had the clothes completely torn from his back, leaving him in the dress he had worn in the gaming room.

"Karl Blasius!" exclaimed Sir Robert Brompton, in utter amazement at the sight he beheld.

"A word with you, Sir Robert."

After a moment's pause, Sir Robert approached, when the robber whispered in his ear:

"I have a secret that nearly concerns you; remember that; betray not your knowledge of who or what I am, or the secret shall die with me. There is no possible way for those people to detain me long—they can produce no evidence against me, and without that, I am easily freed again."

As he whispered thus hurriedly, and stood there with dishevelled hair, and in an attitude of defence, a strange thought passed over Sir Robert's brain: I have seen that man in precisely the same situation before, or nearly so. He closed his eyes, and seemed for a moment lost in thought, then starting, as a picture seemed to present itself, he asked in a whisper, as the robber now stood alone, his hands tied behind him, while the police took notes of the room, and examined the appearance of things closely, as if to make a report of them:

"A strange suspicion has come over me that I have known you in another character besides that of robber, fortune-teller, and gamester—is it not not so?"

"Where?"

"In the tap-room of Mother Giles!"

"We *have* met there."

"And you are Bill the Bold?"

"Hush! To you, yes. But speak not so loud before these witnesses."

Sir Robert mused for a moment longer, and then asked:

"Then it was you who stole away Edith from my house?"

"Yes."

"And you were in the melee of that night when I took her from the tap-room?"

"I was."

"Strange that we did not know each other."

"You were thoroughly disguised."

"That is true."

"And little thought to find Karl Blasius, who was reported dead, in the tap-room of St. Giles."

"That is all very correct—no wonder I did not know you."

"Come to me when I am confined. Befriend me, Sir Robert, not in money matters, I have enough of the *stuff*, but help me as no one else can do, and I will be of great service to you. I will unravel a mystery to you that else must remain hidden forever. Will you remember?"

"I will," replied Sir Robert, thoughtfully, as the police hurried the prisoner away.

"Stay," he said, to those who led him. "I wish to speak one word to my friend."

"Be brief, then—we can't wait long," said the surly official.

"Sir Robert?"

"Well."

"Closer; I wish to whisper to you," he said, waiting for him to draw nearer.

"What do you wish to say?"

"I have no one else to call upon now; will you not lock that door, and take charge of the key for me?"

"Why not give it to these people?"

"There is much there that I would not have seen or overhauled."

"But I hardly think it will be permitted for me to do so."

"Certainly—they have a warrant for my arrest, but not for the seizing of my property. I assure you that it is for your interest to take charge of the key."

"Until I can communicate with you, I will take the key, then," said Sir Robert, locking the door, and putting the key in his pocket.

"Thank you," said the robber; "and now until we meet again, farewell."

"I am ready now," said the prisoner, to those about him, who, though they kept a sharp look-out upon him, had permitted this moment of respite, or release, which enabled him to make the arrangement with Sir Robert concerning the key.

The robber went peaceably with the men—there was no use in resistance—but he sighed heavily.

Sir Robert turned away towards his home in a thoughtful mood. The mystery of many events in his past experience was unravelling itself; he was so wrapped up in these thoughts that he reached his own door before he was aware of it. Summoning Walter to his study, he related to him the events that had just transpired, of course, under the promise of secrecy. He would not have done so to any one else, but Walter himself was so intimately interwoven with these very affairs, that it was a duty he owed to him. As it regarded the robber's fate, it seemed now to be drawing fast towards a close, and confident as he was, still when he entered the walls of Newgate, a chill ran through his frame, and a presentiment possessed his heart that he would never pass them again his own master.

CHAPTER XLV.

CUPID'S DOINGS.

The strife
Of love, faith, fear, and that vain dream of life,
Within her woman breast! HEMANS.

IN the meantime the developments in relation to Lord Amidown, which Walter had been called upon to make to his sister the Lady Josephine, had worked quite a change in the affairs at Sir Robert's house. An intimacy at once sprang up between her and Edith and Clara; Lady Josephine now became a frequent visiter at Sir Robert's. The delight experienced by Edith in the society of one so nearly allied to him she loved, need hardly be referred to, but it was the source of the greatest pleasure to her. Clara too enjoyed her new friend, and truth to say, Sir Robert thought that Lady Josephine paid much more earnest regard to her than she did to Edith; perhaps her taste and temperament were more to her liking.

All this was just as Walter could have desired. It brought him in frequent contact with Lady Josephine, and enabled him to drink in the sweets of her fascinating society. Edith and Clara, of course, could not help smiling within themselves, or at least this was the case with Edith, as she observed how devoted Walter had become to his third choice. We do wrong perhaps to say that Clara laughed at Walter; this was not the case. Secretly she sighed within her heart, though no mortal could detect any such sentiment, as evinced in her outward appearance and bearing. She was never happier than when praising Walter to Josephine, and the latter was never better pleased than when listening to her.

But though Clara delighted to praise Walter for his good qualities before Josephine Amidown, yet when alone in her own room, her heart beat sadly as she realized that he could never be her husband; and in the true generosity of her heart, she would hope that he might be as dearly loved by her who should in the end be his life's companion.—How unselfish was the fair girl's heart, devoted as it was to its love for Walter.

Clara did not exactly envy Edith the position that she now held, but yet she sometimes said to herself, when alone and thoughtful she sat musing in the solitude of her chamber:

"Ah, Edith, Edith, what reason is there that you should not be perfectly at peace, with everything that should make you happy, and above all possessing that jewel—O, my God! too bright for me to contemplate—innocence!"

Poor Clara, how sad, how dreary was everything to thee, even though thy face was so often wreathed in smiles, while Edith and Josephine retired to their pillows to sleep and dream of soft scenes of love and tender endearments, thy wakeful eyes knew no rest, thy throbbing breast kept pace with the steady

march of time, that never sleepeth. Since Edith had become comparatively settled in purpose, and her union with Lord Amidown was considered as a matter of course, and since Walter had seemed to have become the accepted lover of Lady Josephine, Clara had grown a shade more sober and thoughtful; her merriment was more subdued, and the merry peals of laughter wont to rise from her fair lips, were less frequent. This matter neither Edith nor Walter noticed; they were now too full of other thoughts to observe any slight variation in appearance that Clara might evince, but Mrs. Marlow noted it well, and strove by her tender solicitude to make her as happy as possible. But yet the housekeeper realized that there was a worm gnawing at her heart, a secret that doubtless might not be unveiled.

"Dear Miss Clara," said the housekeeper, "you do not seem well to-day; can't I do something for you?"

"O, no, good Mrs. Marlow; you are too thoughtful and kind to me. I am not ill, I assure you."

"Not ill?"

"No."

"O, then you must have something upon your mind I fear, that troubles you, for you look very sad at times."

"Do I?" asked Clara, thoughtfully.

"Yes, indeed you do, Miss Clara."

"Well, we can't be happy always, Mrs. Marlow; one can't smile all the time; even the blue sky, that is so bright in the sunlight, and so sparkling in the clear moonlight, is sometimes covered with clouds."

"True, Miss Clara; but then it is only when a damp mist comes on, or heavy clouds of rain overspread it. Now just like the blue sky, is your soul. What cloud overspreads it; wont you tell me, that I may try to brush it away?"

Clara started at the apt argument of Mrs. Marlow, and walking to a window, looked out for some minutes without saying aught in reply to the query that had been put to her.—Her mind was very busy the while, and she heeded not the scene passing without, upon which her eyes seemed to rest, though their pupils gave back no reflection; there was too much activity within. "Am I so changed," she thought, "that every one notices me of late? I must look to this; they shall find me henceforth as merry as ever before!"

The soft complexion which formed one of Clara's principal attractions in the matter of personal beauty, had of late assumed a more delicate and transparent hue. She had not absolutely grown pale, but the fair color of her cheek was more delicate, and it was more difficult to discover where it commenced and where left off, than it had been heretofore.—A tender pensiveness crept over the expression of her features, and as far as personal beauty was concerned, she was much handsomer than when she first entered Sir Robert Brompton's house as the companion of Edith. The ruby of her sweetly formed lips was less deep, but seemingly more pure, and her pleasurable expression was less decided and earnest in parting those lips, but a gentle answering token of expression of the eyes when she was slightly moved, had formed an added grace to her smile that was doubly attractive.

Indeed, so pure a style of beauty did Clara present, that she had become the paragon of loveliness with all who saw her, and only suffered by comparison with Edith, whose graces and loveliness of person, though of a somewhat different character, yet grew thrivingly as she approached still nearer the maturity of womanhood. Perhaps a majority would have pronounced Edith at the present time to be much the handsomer of the two, but an artist would have pointed out with peculiar satisfaction the extraordinary purity of Clara's expression, and the magic blending of the rose and lily upon her cheek. They would have told you that Edith was beautiful, but that Clara was more artistically lovely. Even Walter, who had known her so long and well, and whose heart was so thoroughly engaged now in another quarter, often paused to gaze in admiration upon Clara.

Lady Josephine Amidown, as compared with either of them, was not handsome, but she possessed a high-bred, easy, attractive and vivacious manner, that is so winning in the gentler sex. An art, or a gift, which ever it may be, that makes even an ordinary face look pretty, and which carries all before it.—You have met with this species of attraction, gentle reader, a hundred times, and such was Lady Josephine's secret of power.

At a card party at Sir Robert's, about the

period we refer to, Colonel Freeman and Captain Sidney had again met. Both were as devoted followers of Clara as ever, and both were quite as hopeless in their suit.

"There, captain, did you ever see such rare beauty as that?" said the colonel, referring to Clara, as she sat turning over some rich engravings upon the centre table, and in a position where the light displayed her features to the best advantage.

The sailor heeded not the remark, and the colonel turned to see that he was also regarding her at that moment with marked admiration, and it was not until he had laid his hand upon his arm that he succeeded in attracting his attention. When he did so, Captain Sidney heaved a sigh, that showed how much interested he was.

"I was speaking of Miss Clara, Sidney; is she not looking superbly to-night?"

"Superbly, colonel? She's a divinity," said the captain, earnestly, still regarding her as he spoke.

That very night, Captain Sidney, seeking a favorable opportunity, offered his heart and hand to Clara, but was so gently, so pleasantly, and yet so decidedly refused, that he swore to a friend the next day in confidence, he had rather have her refuse him, than to have many a more noted belle accept him, she did it so sweetly.

But it was no extraordinary thing for Clara to receive such proposals; indeed she might more than once have married far above Sir Robert Brompton's rank in society, had she felt disposed. There was only one person who could appreciate the delicacy of soul that thus kept Clara free, and that was Edith.—She alone knew the secrets of her early life, and though she was now so much occupied and engaged by her own associations, that she perhaps gave Clara's position less thought than she would else have done; yet she had often fully realized these things, knowing at the same time that it was a wound that even her friendly hand must not probe.

Sir Robert Brompton looked on with warm gratification to see the consummation of Edith's happiness. And it had appeared that the union of Walter and Josephine was a matter already agreed upon, though it was not so announced as yet. The two assimilated most happily together, and the sister of Lord Amidown was in love with Walter beyond a doubt, while he was all devotion and tenderness.—And in this condition, Sir Robert's house presented quite a temple of Hymen, or at least a rendezvous for Cupid. But though Sir Robert was thus happy about his domestic affairs, he now and then felt a strange interest in the robber, who now lay in the dungeons of Newgate. He felt that the man possessed secrets concerning himself that were of vital importance to his own peace of mind to keep unrevealed, and that he also knew of matters concerning Edith that he himself would gladly be master of. These thoughts often caused him to revert to that strange dark man, who had by singular fortune been so intimately connected with his interests.

Sir Robert had latterly leaned more upon Walter for advice than he had previously done. His protegé now knew the whole of his past history, and therefore he felt less restraint with him than he had done when he was obliged at all times to guard the one secret of his life from struggling forth to the light. He had told Walter of his last visit to the fortune-teller, and of the singular result of their last meeting, and asked him what he thought it was best to do.

"Let him receive his deserts, Sir Robert; the world will then be rid of one black-hearted villain at least."

"But, Walter, he possesses my secret—the tangled thread of my child's history is all in his knowledge."

"That is true."

"Besides which, he bade me see him in prison with such a voice and manner, that I knew he had much else to reveal that concerned me nearly. In short, a strange fancy seems to draw me towards him"

"Why, if you desire it so much, you might see him in person."

"Ah! but that will involve me, I know, in other matters. He is friendless and must need counsel and aid, not pecuniary; I know he has money enough, but that wont always buy friends."

"It would be rather bad taste to be counted among the friends of such a man."

"Nevertheless, Walter, feeling impressed as I do, I must visit him."

On the evening of the day on which Sir Robert held this conversation with Walter, he

received from an unknown hand a note, opening which, he read as follows:

"Sir Robert Brompton:

"A week has passed since I last saw you at my house, at which time I was seized and carried to prison by the police. You will remember my earnestly expressed hope at that time, that you would come to me in Newgate. I have daily looked for you, more earnestly, perhaps, because I have no visiters at all, and see only my jailer. I should not urge upon you to visit me, if my desire were a selfish one only. I feel that I possess knowledge that to you is most invaluable. This I will only part with in consideration that you offer me such reasonable aid as you can do in getting me legal counsel and taking other steps to have me cleared from this vile duress. It will not be necessary for you to appear in the matter at all, so that you will compromise nothing by this kindness to me.

"As another inducement to bring you here, there is an act of justice that I desire to do for Lord Amidown, which I will entrust to your hands—something very important to him in a pecuniary point of view. This inducement alone, I should think, must be sufficient to bring you to my cell. I shall look for you with impatience. K. B."

This note aroused all Sir Robert's curiosity afresh. There was evidently some matter of eminent importance to him that the robber was willing to impart, provided he was once assured of his assistance in his present dilemma, and though Sir Robert actually felt conscientious scruples as to aiding such a scourge to society in any way, still he was irresistibly drawn forward to meet with him, if not to serve him, as he desired he should do. The clause relating to Lord Amidown, too, was of importance. Sir Robert was some time since convinced that Karl Blasius was the person who had won so largely from his intended son-in-law, and he thought that no doubt he proposed to refund at least a part of the money. A matter of little importance to one so rich as Sir Robert, but of great consequence to Lord Amidown in the matter of his pride, and also as it regarded his sister's situation, who was now comparatively dependent upon her friends and relations.

"There, Walter, you remember what we were talking of to-day?"

"Yes."

"Well, read this note—it is from him. How he has managed to send it, I don't know."

"I should go to see him most decidedly," said Walter, after running over the note.

"Very well—I shall do so, then, let what may come of the interview."

The proper permit was accordingly procured, and Sir Robert prepared to visit his singular acquaintance on the following day, in the damp cells of Newgate. Walter offered to go with him, but he preferred to go by himself.

In the meantime, while the robber was breathing the damp air of this prison house, he called to mind his confinement at the castle of Amantz, on the Rhine, years gone by.

CHAPTER XLVI.

A SCENE IN NEWGATE.

And like to this may my fate be,
To swing from the limb of a leafless tree.—Robber Song.

Leaving the family of Sir Robert Brompton to enjoy all the regal comforts of his princely mansion, the reader must come with us for a while into that far-famed place of confinement, Newgate—the dreary prison of the metropolis; the den where crime and sin of every description has its representative, of both sexes and of every age. A Babel of sin reigns within these walls, where so many evil spirits congregate, and vice seems to impregnate the very air.

Unlike the present mode of separating the criminals, unless they were confined for some extraordinary breach of the laws, such as murder, they were here cast into large apartments of the building, and herded together like so many cattle. At certain hours they were permitted to go out into an open square of the prison, enclosed by high walls and guarded by soldiers, where they presented a most heterogeneous compound of human nature horrid to behold. There were decrepid old men and women, as gray in sin as they were in years, middle aged persons, presenting all the physical developments of the prime of life, here immured and pent up, like so many sheep in a pen. There were young persons also, male and female, some with vice strongly impressed upon their young faces, and others, whom to look upon, presented no tokens of crime or guilt, and doubtless some there were really innocent.

A bustle was quite apparent in one corner of the yard where the prisoners were now airing themselves, and on close inspection, it was discernible that some carpenters were at work erecting a gallows there. Significant token! Some of those nearest the spot were cracking vulgar jokes about the matter, with a hardened indifference that bespoke a long familiarity with vice and crime. Others looked upon the scene with a dull, yet curious eye, and seemed to lose thought as to what the object of the erection was in the minute observation of the detail of its formation, observing with care the fitting of each joint, and the manner in which it was secured. There was one looking upon it with a pallid cheek, for its significance brought home to his mind his own chances, perhaps. On one side, two females had got one of the timbers across a pile of the rest, and each seated upon an end of it, were tilting!

What a strange spectacle that place presented.

THE MISTAKE OF A LIFE-TIME.

CHAPTER XLVI.—[CONTINUED.]

There might have been a hundred criminals or prisoners strolling there at this moment, mostly awaiting trial for various offences. In an opposite corner to that where the gallows was erecting, sat two persons upon the bare ground, engaged in some game. They had picked up some shell stones which they succeeded in marking, and were now gambling with them for imaginary piles of gold, which were represented by bits of chips and shavings broken into small particles. These men were beyond the prime of life, and yet they were as much absorbed, apparently, as a child would have been in this simple game; the habit of gaming was so strong upon them, that even this trifling occupation was a relief and amusement.

"Peste!" at last exclaimed one of the men, whose appearance showed him to be a Frenchman. "I'm very much tired of this. I have lose all mine gold—you have robbed me altogether. I am von beggar."

"Very well," said the other, gathering the chips and shavings all over to his own side.

"Vat you say about ze new prisoner they lock up in ze cell?"

"That feller in No. 18 over there?" said the other, pointing to a wing of the building where the cells were numbered.

"*Oui—exactement.*"

"O, that's Bill the Bold—don't you remember him, Chevalier?"

"Ah, I remember ze Bill ze Bold, very much too well."

"Where he turned up from no one knows; he hasn't been to any of our old places for more than a year, but he's in for it now, that's sure, or they wouldn't lock him up in that place, away from the rest of us."

"That ees very true," said the little Frenchman, whom the reader will remember to have met before.

It was fortunate for Karl Blasius that he was confined in a separate place from such beings as those who thronged the court or yard beneath his window. Not but that he was as deeply sunken in crime, and perhaps even more so, than most of them, but yet his mind was so superior, his mental faculties had been so much better cultivated, and there was a native spirit and pride in his nature, which would have but poorly brooked the mingling with such as they were in that place. True, he had been much with the same class, but not on equal terms. He had always been master, and above his fellows. There he would have been on a footing with the meanest, and probably the jest of some who had felt his authority in a different situation. He looked out through the bars of his cell with strange emotions upon that motley assemblage, and he

could even see the point where the gallows was erecting, and followed out a long train of thought suggested by the sight of that "leafless tree."

But he sat now musing to himself in the furthermost corner of his cell.

He had been impatiently awaiting the expected visit of Sir Robert, and this led him to recall the time when he had first met with him in his native valley. From one circumstance to another, his mind reverted still farther back in the darkness of his own life. He tried to recall it all now, even from his very boyhood. The event that had first driven him from the pale of society, and made him the enemy of the law, was as vividly recalled now to his mind as its reality had appeared many long years before. He followed up those events and their connections, to the period of his acquaintance with the Lady Gustine, and the minutest circumstance of that period was depicted in his memory. He recalled the many long days, weeks, and months of his confinement at Amantz, his almost miraculous escape, his course over the current of the swift-running river, and his escape in a westward bound ship to the Spanish Indies. His bloody and dangerous career there, and finally step by step he renewed his life thus to the present hour.

And then he fell to reflecting upon his probable fate. He seemed to have become possessed of a singular gloom of spirits since he had been confined here; a few days only had passed, but he had changed much. The native fire of his eye that had defied the power of time, which had written its lines on all else of his physiognomy, seemed to have become dulled, and a keen observer would have detected a listlessness of expression that told of a growing indifference in the possessor as to his future condition, and yet at times they lighted up, as though occasion might arouse their native energy yet.

Karl Blasius could obtain no information as to what charge had led to his arrest, or who had brought it; all was wrapped in mystery. To his chagrin and annoyance, he was told that his trial or hearing before the judges would not come on for many months, and that in the meantime he must remain thus immured in his gloomy cell.

After he was informed of this fact, he felt no longer in haste as it regarded Sir Robert's matters. He required the aid of some person situated like him, and he resolved to make the most of the secret information which he possessed, and which he knew full well Sir Robert so much desired to understand. Moreover he felt in some way connected in his interests with him as it regarded his business matters, since Sir Robert held the key of his private apartment. At the time of his arrest, the police made no attempt to possess themselves of anything, but simply to take note of the situation of affairs, and as they passed from the door, the robber turned to Sir Robert, as will be remembered, asking him to take charge of the key for him. It was on this very day that the jailer had informed his prisoner of the matters concerning himself, and Karl Blasius sat reflecting upon them now, when the door suddenly opened, and the jailor admitted Sir Robert Brompton.

The two bowed to each other, but paused for the jailer to leave the cell, before they spoke.

More than an hour was passed by them together there. The result of which was of no particular satisfaction to Sir Robert, any farther than the restoration to Lord Amidown of fifty thousand pounds. The robber revealed to Sir Robert the secret of his wealth, and where he might obtain the money that he desired thus to refund. To all Sir Robert's inquiries as to the secret that he promised to divulge, he recived but one answer, and that was, that he realized it to be the only claim upon him that was left, and that once divulged, Sir Robert would neither heed nor care for him in the future.

Richly repaid for his visit in the pleasure of restoring to Lord Amidown so large a part of his losses, Sir Robert fulfilled the errand after leaving the robber; but he was satisfied that time must develop the secret that he held.

It was a vivid scene that closed that day. At the set of sun the gallows, which had been nearly all day erecting, was called into requisition to perform its wonted and legitimate purpose. The prisoners were altogether in the yard to witness the scene which was foolishly expected to operate to their advantage, and to lead to their reform. From his cell window the robber gazed with a strange fascination

upon the execution, as it progressed stage by stage.

With all the ceremony and pomp that such evil scenes are always clothed in, the fearful deed of official murder was commenced. The victim, a young man who else might have found years of sad repentance, and finally of true reform, was hurried, with all his sins fresh upon his young and thoughtless head, to the grave. The robber saw him ascend the scaffold with a firm step, and his blood thrilled through his veins at a token of firmness that challenged his admiration. He felt, notwithstanding all his own experience, and all the daring scenes through which he had passed, that under such circumstances his own limbs would fail him, old as he was in iniquity and sin. That boy yonder, suffering now, perhaps for his very first offence, taught him a lesson, and set him an example that was beyond his power and ability to imitate. That boy was his master in spirit and firmness.

This thought of the calmness with which the boy had died, seemed to trouble him strangely. He could not forget it, but walked backward and forward in his cell, musing upon the scene he had just witnessed. He seemed all at once to fully realize that his own end could not be very far distant; and yet it was not the fear of death that seemed to trouble him, so much as the idea that had just come over him, as to whether he could die with firmness, if he must do so in public, or whether he could show the white feather and play the craven before the crowd. He mused thus to himself, until at last a thought seemed to suggest itself to his mind, when he thrust his hand into his bosom, and drew forth a small dagger, so minute in size, that it had escaped the eye and search of the officers who had first placed him there. He looked at the well-tempered, but tiny instrument for a moment, in silence, and then said, half aloud:

"Ay, if the worst comes to the worst, this shall free me from all doubt. This blade is just long enough, when properly handled, to reach the vital spot. I do not fear to do that, no, no—but a gaping and curious crowd to see me executed, would unnerve me; I could not go to my death as I have always trod the earth! But I need not despair. True, I have done enough in Italy, on the ocean, in Paris, and in London, to condemn me; but my cards have been carefully played, and how few know me in more than one character; and those, why they are not such as to witness against me. Some idle report has caused my arrest, and confinement, and I weary in waiting for my day of trial. There can be no witnesses—no, no. I'm safe enough—but curse this confinement."

The robber talked thus to himself for a while longer, then said:

"How calmly, with what firmness that boy died. I wish I had not seen that; what makes me think so much about it? But never mind, never mind—I have my resort if the worst comes to the worst."

But these executions were of frequent occurrence, and the robber must witness them often from the barred window of his cell. A sad prospect for a guilty man to look upon, feeling that his own fate most likely would be of a similar character.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE COTTAGE HOME.

I smile no more—but all my days
Walk with still footsteps, and with humble eyes,
An everlasting hymn within my soul. WILSON.

SIR ROBERT had lately noticed the melancholy that at times seemed to defy Clara's attempts at disguise, and to shroud her sweet face in a mantle of black. He had tried to dispel it by reasoning with her, and had referred to her prospects in life, her former cheerful spirits, and a hundred trifling arguments why she should be happy. By the most kind and thoughtful attention, he strove to dispel her sombre mood, for spite of her resolution to the contrary, she could not now appear so careless and happy as she used to do, with a crowd about her. Hoping by a change of scene to awaken her once more, and to render her more like her former self, her patron proposed a country residence for a few summer months. The idea was acceded to with avidity by Clara, she foresaw so much of quiet and such opportunity for reflection, and undisturbed communion with her own heart. She was vastly overjoyed at the prospect of seeing and living even for a short period in the midst of shady groves, and where she might overlook the rural landscape. Delighted at her apparent interest in the matter, Sir Robert at once caused to be prepared a quiet residence a half-day's journey from London, where he and Clara, with such of the family as chose to come down occasionally, might find agreeable accommodations. In this pleasant abode, Clara found herself domesticated with the kind Mrs. Marlow, while Sir Robert equally divided his time between London and Haredale.

The summer months had already commenced, and the glad earth was putting forth its wealth of vegetation, the soft and fragrant flowers were bursting forth from every hill side, and thickening leaves began to spread themselves about the lattice of the cottage window. The birds nestled and sung in the graceful elms that overshadowed the door, and little sparrows came daily to pick the crumbs that Clara threw forth upon the smooth gravelled walk. A freshness as pure and invigorating as that which seemed to inspire the honeysuckle and morning glories that graced the garden walls, also seemed to impregnate her sad and lonely heart, and Mrs. Marlow told Sir Robert that she was quite like herself.

Clara loved to walk in the grove that ran back of the cottage until it ended in the grave yard, attached to the village church. She would take a book with her, and sitting alone

beneath the still shade of the trees, read to herself or muse in quietude. Then she would walk among the gray old tombstones, and try to make out the names engraven upon each stone, until she had read them all, and felt half as though she knew those who slept beneath. She even picked out a quiet spot in a remote corner of the grave-yard, where she told Mrs. Marlow that she thought she could sleep more quietly than if she were in the tombs that were built in the city.

"O, do not talk about such things, Clara," said the housekeeper; "it will be time enough for that many, many years hence. You must enjoy many happy years yet."

A faint smile was the only answer that Mrs. Marlow received. But after a little pause she asked:

"Are you happy, Mrs. Marlow?"

"O, yes, I hope so, Clara, as happy as we can be in this life."

"Ah! that is it," said Clara, earnestly, "in this life. I often think of that, and wonder if when we lay down to sleep in the grave, our spirits will then be happy."

"You mustn't talk so seriously, Clara; think of pleasanter subjects."

"Ah! but it does seem to me that I should be so happy to lie down in one long dreamless sleep, forgetting all the past. I could be willing to die, I think, this very hour."

Mrs. Marlow marked the quiet, unexcited manner of her speech, and she almost trembled as she saw how honestly Clara spoke. She marked too that the brightness of her eyes had faded of late, and she thought that the color of her cheek was fading gradually. But of these things she said nothing, though they inwardly gave her much pain, for she loved Clara better and more tenderly every day.

When the Sabbath came, Clara and Sir Robert would go and listen to divine service at the village church, and Clara enjoyed it far better than she did in the crowded aisles of the richly decorated town temples. Indeed she seemed refreshed by the sincere, though simple service, and listened to the words of the young curate with absorbed attention.—He was a young man, but an enthusiast in his profession, and possessed of a soul baptized in the dictates of revealed religion. He would dwell with tears in his eyes, upon the career and suffering of the lowly Jesus, and delighted in proclaiming the never failing love, forgiveness and impartial grace of the great Father of all, the Shepherd of our souls.

In her walks, Clara sometimes met Earnest Brandon, and at first they past each other with a slight, but polite recognition; but the young curate, in the ordinary discharge of his duty, called occasionally upon all those who listened to his ministrations, and thus he was brought to meet with Clara at her cottage home. His quiet, thoughtful and religious turn of mind strongly impressed her, because it was in accordance with her own feelings, and the curate on his part seemed singularly interested in one so pensive and intelligent, who seemed to be suffering under a wounded spirit; therefore when they met it was often to walk on together, and to converse upon those matters that his calling would naturally suggest.

Clara found a strange balm in his conversation; she gave up her mind entirely to the study of the creed that he believed, and so ardently taught. She was never tired of hearing him dwell upon the forgiving kindness of Christ, and the holy consolation that the repentant sinner was sure to obtain.

The visits of the curate became at last of almost daily occurrence, and the two, absorbed truly and fully in the holy theme that formed the subject of their discussion, grew more and more intimate in soul and feeling, without realizing it, until the young and devout follower of the Saviour felt a new fire kindled in his breast, and realized that while he was making a convert of the fair young girl, he was also losing his own heart. Her great beauty of person, her more valued beauty of intellect, had strongly impressed him, until he felt that he loved her almost too well.

The idea of such a state of things between her and Earnest Brandon had never entered Clara's mind. She felt the warmest friendship and respect for him, but love she had none to bestow. She had loved once, she could never love again, for love with her seemed to be a guilty thing. "Love? what have I to do with love?" she used to ask herself.

She was walking one afternoon in the grove with the young curate, when, after touching upon many congenial topics of conversation, they had seated themselves upon a grassy

knoll. Earnest Brandon had been more than usually pensive and thoughtful, and there was now a pause of some moments in the conversation. At last he said:

"Clara, we have been much and happily together, and in discussing those subjects connected with our greatest and most lasting interests, we have studied well each other's hearts—"

The curate paused for a moment, while Clara turned an anxious eye upon him.

"In short, Clara, after the delightful communion that I have enjoyed with you, I feel that I love you."

"Mr. Brandon!"

"Have I offended you?" he asked, quickly, as he marked the tones of her voice.

"No, not offended, but grieved me. O, sir, never harbor for me any other feelings than those of a friend—a dear and earnest friend I shall always be glad to have you esteem me."

"Must this be so, beyond any hope of change, Clara?"

"I can never feel any differently upon the subject. O, how wrong it has been for me to draw so much upon your time, enjoying your society, your teachings, and your kindness so constantly, and only to bring about this result."

"Nay, reproach not yourself, Clara. Has not my enjoyment of your society been also most sweet? Surely I have been paid manyfold for my own labors, by your aptness, and by the spirit in which you have received the doctrine I teach."

"If I have done aught to create such a feeling as you profess, Mr. Brandon, I pray you to forgive me, for, believe me, I could not willingly have given rise to sentiments that I can never encourage."

"I know you would not. Say no more, nor blame yourself in the least," said the curate, "we will meet none the less frequently, I trust, Clara, but in the future as friends, trusting and confiding friends only."

"O, a thousand thanks," she said, with an animation that lit up with fire, as it were, her sweet face.

They parted then. The curate, ardent and imaginative as he was, yet was not foolish enough to pine over his disappointment. He only sought to forget it by more earnest application to his profession. His heart was so deeply wedded to his calling, that he could more easily turn to it, even from the fond hope he had cherished, than most persons could have done. His day dream was over, but his purpose, his grand aim of life remained, and though it cost him many hours of struggle after he reached his home on leaving Clara, yet he strove with his passion and prayed fervently for aid to help him on in his duty, and to keep him from too earnest a worldly affection.

Clara was differently affected; in her sensitiveness she imagined herself greatly to blame for that which had transpired. Besides she could not screen herself from her thoughts as the curate did. She had no routine of duty to engage in of a character to make her forget, even temporarily, the fresh sadness that had been caused by Mr. Brandon's misunderstanding her. Though she had often blessed the chance that had brought her into the country where she had enjoyed the beauties of nature so fully and entirely, yet now she could not but wish that she had never come hither.

The curate was but little less assiduous in his attendance at the cottage. Perhaps they walked together less than they had been in the habit of doing, but the same studies and themes served them for conversation, though the subject that had caused Clara so much pain, was never referred to even for a single moment. His attentions, which were of the most thoughtful and delicate character, were yet so strongly tinctured with respect, that outward observers could have detected no token of love. Mrs. Marlow said to one of her neighbors, who was a little inquisitive, that the curate and Clara were only like a brother and sister.

Months rolled on thus, during which time Clara's disposition and character had undergone a marked change. The forced spirits that she had been so long in the habit of indulging in, were laid aside altogether, and a soft resignation, that could hardly be called melancholy, had taken possession of her sweet face. She was perhaps in reality more happy than when she had so schooled herself at Sir Robert's to belie her feelings, for then she felt a half consciousness of guilt and deception upon her heart all the day long; while now she gave herself up to those reflections

which her studies in religious matters had suggested.

Edith and Walter, with Lord Amidown and his sister, not unfrequently came down to Haredale to see Clara, but although they said nothing to her of the impression of their visits, yet when they went away they never failed to remark how changed she had grown since she had come from the city. Edith, who tenderly loved her, would walk with Clara through all her quiet haunts in the grove and along the meadows, and in the gray old church yard, and would enter into all her simple, but heartfelt enjoyment, at every theme of the suggestive scene about them, in the flowers, the birds, and the twilight hour.

"These are sweet and happy subjects, dear Clara; invigorating to all the senses."

"O, yes, and they put one so at peace within, Edith, and give such assurance of divine goodness."

"True, Clara, and yet I fear that an undue contemplation of these things leads you into melancholy. Why, you do not seem to sleep at all. No matter how early I get up, I always find you are before me, feeding those little tame sparrows that fly to your hands, or attending to the pretty flower-bed yonder. I do not blame you for loving these things, O, no, Clara; but then too constant and absorbed a pursuit of any one subject wearies and and weakens the mind."

"But I was never so happy in town, Edith, as I am now. I never knew myself and nature so well. O, you don't know how my heart has grown with the blossoms and flowers since I came here in the spring, and how it has ripened as the thick foliage and the seeds have matured, and the harvest day by day approaches. Sometimes I feel half inclined to pray that I too may be gathered in with the rest of the harvest, and be laid to rest where I showed you."

"Say not so, Clara, you make me feel very sad," answered Edith, with her cheeks wet with tears. "I know you are better and less worldly than I am; perhaps I am too much taken up with selfish things—I feel that I am —but I can appreciate your feelings. And yet, believe me, dear Clara, it is not best to indulge in melancholy, though it is sweet, ah! very sweet to the sorrowing heart. I have tasted the cup myself, ay, and drunk its bitterest depths."

"Not its *bitterest* depths, Edith," said her companion, with emphasis.

"I thought so, Clara."

"Ah! Edith, you always had one sustaining consciousness that was worth more than all else, a strength that none can appreciate who have not realized its loss. You always knew, Edith, let chance and circumstance play whatever freaks they would with you, that still in yourself you were innocent and pure!"

"May heaven grant me to the last, Clara, as pure a soul as you possess."

We have carried the reader thus, to witness Clara's cottage life, because we desire more fully to develop the character and disposition of this lovely girl. It had only seemed to require the pure air and soft influences of the country to bleach and thoroughly purify her gentle spirit, and the belongings of her cottage home had brought out in its truth the entire loveliness of her sweet disposition, and prepared her at heart for higher and nobler aspirations.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE CURATE'S DAUGHTER.

A man he was to all the country dear,
And passing rich with forty pounds a year. GOLDSMITH.

LEAVING Clara for a while to pursue those thoughtful walks in the grove behind her cottage home, which she loved so well, we must refer to other characters in our varying plot. It is still in these country scenes that we wish to keep you, gentle reader, at least for the present, and at a spot not many miles from Clara's rural home.

There is no country in the world whose pastoral beauties can compare with those of some of the rural counties of Old England.—Tracts of land, enriched by immemorial culture, present during the spring and summer the sweetest variety of herbage and foliage, and while, interspersed with productions that minister to the wants of man, there is much that is purely ornamental, and addresses itself especially to the taste. Thus, the cottage of the poorest peasant—and heaven knows that some of the peasantry of "Merrie England" are poor enough—is surrounded by flowers, overgrown with clematis and eglantine, and can boast its climbing roses, and its verdurous shade tree.

The territorial divisions which, on this side of the Atlantic, are formed of rough posts and rails, or ragged and unsightly stone walls, overgrown with brambles, there consist of luxuriant hedge-rows of buckthorn or hawthorn, the latter forming at certain seasons of the year a living wall of odorous blossoms; while here and there, as if to prevent monotony, rise tall elms, or branching oaks, or graceful lindens, among the branches of which the little birds sit swinging and warbling in the alternate sunshine and shadow. Under these trees repose in the sultry noontime, groups of cattle well fed, sleek and shining from perpetual care, while upon the uplands browse flocks of sheep almost as white as the fleecy clouds that spot the firmament above them. In some of these enclosures wave billowy fields of grain, now green as the water of a shallow bay, anon golden as the same waves enlightened by a mellow sunrise.

The line of the horizon, and the surface of the country, is just sufficiently broken to relieve the eye, differing totally from the dead level of the rich and fertile Netherlands, while the parks and preserves of the landed gentlemen, with their vast ancestral trees, communicate an air of grandeur and massiveness to the expanded landscape.

These romantic scenes, where nature has done so much, and art has so closely followed in her footsteps as to seem a better nature,

would appear to be peculiarly fitted for the dwelling-place of gentle hearts and guileless souls. It would seem as if the evil passions and vain desires which run riot in crowded cities, would here perish, death-stricken by the calm and silent rebuke of the beautiful and the true. But human nature is the same everywhere, and there are passions so strong, and wills so self-sustained, that no external influence can tame or exterminate them.

It was in one of those rural counties which we have referred to, that the Rev. Ambrose Warden dwelt, the curate of a little parish but a few leagues from Haredale, at a period some years prior to the commencement of our story. He had struggled with indigence while pursuing his preparatory studies, and his career at Oxford was marked alike by studious assiduity and personal privation. At length he graduated with all the honors of his Alma Mater. The friendship of an early school-fellow of Harrow procured him a curacy, and though his annual stipend was but little more than fifty pounds a year, yet with his simple tastes and habits he felt content, and would have deemed the sum ample had not the shafts of the blind god, which spare the cassock of the curate no more than the steel cuirass of the soldier, penetrated his heart.

The Rev. Mr. Warden fell in love with the daughter of a parishioner, poorer, if possible, than himself. Whether he had any actual promises of church preferment to rely upon, or whether his passion blinded him to the future, we know not, but he boldly led Miss Emeline Woodley to the altar, and carried her home in happy triumph to Woodbine Cottage. The union was a happy one, though the toil and care that devolved at once upon the bride of a poor country clergyman, soon began to tell upon the delicate frame of the curate's wife.

Yet the gentle being struggled bravely with fortune, and was but too happy when she succeeded in disguising her failing health and active labor from the anxious eyes of her husband, and when at last she sank away in his arms, he attributed her death to some temporary malady, rather than to a long course of hardship and privation. But she was happy both in her life and in her death, and with her last aspirations she commended her little Emma to the charge of her husband and the kind care of Providence, in the full faith that both were adequate to temper the wind to the shorn lamb.

"My time, dear husband, has come; it seemeth good to the Lord to call me home, and why should I repine? My only concern is for you and our dear little Emma, but heaven will bless you both."

The husband could only press the thin hand of his dying wife, while he bent over her to hide his tears.

With a soft and tender smile upon her pale face, the young mother breathed her last.

Faithfully did the widowed husband fulfil his promise to the departed. No mother could have been kinder or more considerate; his child was all in all to him, and he doted upon it both for its own sake, and the memory of its dearly beloved mother. Mr. Warden had studied the peculiarities and the intricacies of the female heart; not as many men do for the purpose of depravation and destruction, but to know where to administer consolation, where support, and where aid. Under his care and experience, Emma grew up beautiful, gentle, affectionate, charitable and pious. Her affection was not of that kind which wastes itself in sickly sentiment; her charity not of that description that neglects the household hearth, to scatter its sympathies and benefits abroad; nor was her piety of that stamp which begins and ends in cold formalities and observances, in lip-worship and like external devotion. God—her father—her fellow creatures—these were the objects of a love that varied only in intensity, but whose unity was intangible. "To be good and to do good," was the basis of her entire creed, and she fully lived up to the spirit of her heart-logic.

Thus Woodbine Cottage, though bereft of the gentle mother's spirit, was nevertheless the paradise of constant and quiet joy, and Mr. Warden was a man to be envied for his home relations. The village teemed with praise and sincere love for the occupants of the parsonage, and the humble curate with his meagre income, was a happy man.

Until her nineteenth year, Emma had found that her domestic and charitable duties, together with her studies, were all sufficient for the occupation of her mind and heart, and she had no luxurious habits, and no idle moments

for day-dreaming; her imagination had never been betrayed into any dangerous idealizing. She had never lost herself in the glowing and enticing fields of romance; she only reflected the real life about her, and her heart was as simple as it was true.

But the fates bring queer things to pass, and Emma was destined to see a great change come over her quiet life.

It so chanced that Francis Marlow, the son of Charles Marlow, the old school fellow of her father, to whom he owed the curacy that supported him, visited his father's country seat in the neighborhood, to enjoy a few days' sporting, previous to his departure for the East. It must be premised that Sir Charles Marlow had himself died in India, that the villa alluded to had been for many years neglected, and perhaps entirely forgotten by its wealthy owner, and that Francis, with only a younger brother's portion, had been provided for by a cornetcy in one of the East India Company's cavalry regiments, and had nothing but his sword and his horse for his future dependence. But he was full of life and spirit, generous, free-hearted, and manly in every prompting of his heart; the future was unclouded before him, and his heart was light.

It was natural for the young officer to call upon the old friend of his late father, of whom he remembered to have heard him speak; it was natural for him to meet with a cordial reception, and it was also natural for him to be strongly impressed with the beauty of a young girl, whom he found blooming like a lily in this sequestered valley. An intimacy followed, the dangers of which Mr. Warden did not perceive until he found that his daughter's affections were irrevocably engaged.

It was not in his nature then to reproach Francis with having taken advantage of the susceptibility of his daughter, for it was very evident to the parent that the error was a mutual one, and besides, the young cornet, generous, handsome and noble-hearted, was the very son-in-law he would have chosen, had not his poverty forbidden a union which could only entail distress and misery upon both parties. This he frankly told Francis.

"But, sir," said the ardent young soldier, "I have a brother you know in London, who inherits the whole of my father's large property; I will apply to him for aid, and if that shall come, then—"

"Then I cannot withhold my consent to your union," replied the curate.

"I am sure of success, then," he replied, warmly, anticipating a prompt and generous response from his brother.

"Be not too confident, Francis," said the curate, who knew the human heart better than his young friend.

"I have spoken with your father, Emma, dear, and he consents."

"Consents, Francis?"

"Yes, provided my brother will assist me pecuniarily," replied her lover.

He wrote his brother an affectionate and sincere letter, stating exactly how he was situated, and soliciting a modest allowance from the surplus of Sir Charles's fortune, at the same time pledging his honor to reimburse him when his own exertions should be crowned with success. In his letter to his brother, he described to him, only as a lover's pen could do, the extraordinary beauty, both mental and personal, of her whose hand he sought, and finally ended with an appeal to his brotherly regard. The reply was a harshly worded refusal, that insulted, as well as disappointed, the young brother.

"Francis," said the curate, "under the circumstances, I feel it my duty, both for Emma's sake and your own, that you part at once. Perhaps fortune may smile on your efforts, and then, if you are both constant—you may be united."

"I know your motives too well, dear sir, to question them for a moment. My regiment will sail in a week, and I shall join them at once; but I shall leave my heart in Woodbine Cottage," he replied, sadly.

With breaking hearts, the lovers parted, promising mutual fidelity, and consoling each other with words of hope.

Soon after the departure of Francis, who seemed to carry with him all the sunshine and contentment of the parsonage, Mr. Warden received word that he had sailed. Most fervent prayers ascended to the throne of grace for the safety of the young adventurer upon the perilous deep. Weeks had passed, and Emma was beginning to recover from her agitation and distress, and to find consolation in

her daily and religious duties, when, one evening, as she was standing at the cottage gate, a figure was seen approaching, which she seemed to recognize through the uncertain twilight. In another moment she was clasped in the arms of her lover.

"Francis!" she exclaimed, in tones of mingled astonishment and pleasure.

"Yes, your own Francis," was the tender reply that greeted her.

"But how can this be possible?"

"A freak of fortune, Emma."

"But the papers said that you sailed with the regiment for India."

"That was all very true; but I have been badly used by the winds and waves."

"Wrecked?"

"Yes, gentle one. We were driven back by a tempest and wrecked upon the coast of Cornwall."

"Fearful mishap!"

"Rather happy chance, Emma," continued her lover.

"How so, Francis?"

"Because my misfortune has proved a blessing. I have seen my brother—he has relented—he grants me all that I could ask of him, and I come back with gold to redeem my beloved. Your father will no longer withhold his consent—we will be married at once, and try together if the ocean will not be more merciful."

"O, let us hasten at once to my father with this news."

"What—to-night?"

"To-night! yes—are you not eager to embrace him?"

"O, certainly."

"How cool you speak, Francis; why my father will be delighted to see you."

"Yes, Emma, but you must remember that I have just escaped from a shipwreck, and that I have been so exposed, and suffered so severely, that I am hardly myself."

Emma seemed glad to understand this, for there was a want of cordiality in his manner that was quite different from himself, she thought. But she was too much bewildered to be very critical now, and she brought him at once into the house, and to her father's side. Mr. Warden was of course surprised and delighted at the wanderer's return, and asked him many questions in relation to his adventures and future prospects.

His replies with regard to the latter subject, particularly, were very satisfactory, and he exhibited authority from his brother to draw upon him to an unlimited amount. The only drawback to this change of circumstances was the necessity which existed of removing Emma immediately from the paternal roof, and making her the companion of her husband's distant wanderings. But the good pastor concealed his grief, and where is the woman's heart that would not cling fondly to the partner of her choice, though ties scarcely less dear are to be severed by the union? And thus was it with the gentle Emma Warden.

The next day, Mr. Warden joined their hands, and the following hour, Emma, now become Mrs. Marlow, took a heart-rending farewell of her father, and sprang into a post chaise that was to convey her with her husband to the sea-shore; for he had represented to them that his regiment, having been all saved, were once more just about to embark again for their destination.

Francis appeared strangely abstracted, and his manner, passionate and cold, by turns, surprised his wife by its singularity. His principal concern seemed to be to hurry on the post boys and the horses, until towards night they drove up through an avenue of ancient elm trees, to the door of a stately mansion, embowered and almost hidden in verdant foliage.

"Come, my dear, we will stop here for the night," he said, preparing to alight.

"Why, what place is this, Francis?"

"An old mansion-house, but a very comfortable one, I assure you."

"But I thought we were to go on board your ship to-night?"

"Ah, true, true—I forgot that; but we will talk those affairs over after we get into the house."

Emma leaned upon his arm, but her heart almost failed her, at the strange coldness she met in her husband.

A number of servants in sumptuous liveries awaited them at the door; Emma was astounded at all she beheld. But her companion seemed to take no notice of this, simply leading her on, and receiving the ready homage and respect of the many servants, until

they at last found themselves within a sumptuously furnished drawing-room.

"Emma," he said, after closing the door, and approaching her.

"Well, Francis?"

"Am I Francis?"

"Why, what do you mean? you almost frighten me by such conduct and such singular questions."

"Well, it is a strange business," replied her husband, musing.

"What is strange?"

"Why, Emma, you must forgive the deception I have practised upon you!"

"Deception, Mr. Marlow?"

"Yes, Emma, you are thoroughly and most egregiously mistaken."

"What do you mean?"

"They say that Jove laughs at love's perjuries. If this is so, now let him laugh his fill, for you are wedded, not to your first love—a pauper younger son—but to Sir Charles Marlow, the richest land-holder in all of England, and one who will love and take care of you far better than the poor India cornet could do."

"Do I hear aright? am I awake? what does all this mean?"

"You are in the full possession of all your faculties, Emma."

"No, no, no. This is a dreadful dream," she cried, shuddering.

"Not so, Emma, but a bright reality.—Know that my brother and myself are examples of one of those striking freaks of nature, by which she sometimes assimilates two members of a family by a resemblance which defies the closest scrutiny. Were Francis here, and myself standing side by side, the eyes of love even would be baffled in seeking to identify the object of its preference. We are alike in every particular."

"Except in soul," retorted the agonized girl, almost frantic with sobs.

"Hush, proud girl, and hear me out," said the baronet.

"Go on, sir, it is fitting that I should know the truth now," replied the young wife, with a bitter sarcasm expressed in her voice, and an expression of contempt wreathing her handsome lips.

"My brother wrote to me, as you doubtless know; that letter, filled as it was with glowing thoughts and descriptions of thee, portraying, I acknowledge, most faithfully your beauty, fired my imagination, and filled me with a desire to see one who was so beautiful.—I came down into the country in disguise, and hovering about Woodland Cottage, saw you, and acknowledge that my brother's letter had even fellen far short of the bright reality he described. To refuse his application for aid, and to send him despairing to the East, was the work of a man who never yet permitted any obstacle to impede the progress of his will.—To personate my brother, to impose on you and your father, and at last to make you so quickly mine, were easy tasks under the circumstances. And now I have triumphed, and forever possess a legal title to your hand and person, if not your heart."

"False and perjured villain," cried the excited victim. "Your every word is false; not only my heart, but my hand and person are free, and rather than yield to you, I will spring from yonder turret window and dash my limbs to atoms on the pavements below."

"Go on, my brave one, go on," said the baronet, with provoking coolness.

"O, that I should have been so deceived!" she exclaimed, wringing her hands bitterly, "and my poor dear father too, alas! I fear 'twill break his heart. Was ever such perfidy known before?"

"There is no mood that doth not become thee," he continued, as he stood watching his victim with folded arms, "and I think a little spirit rather heightens the style and effect of that pretty face of thine, my wife!"

"Call me not by that name; it is sacred, and if you abuse it, heaven will signally punish thee. I am no wife of thine; no laws will sanction such a vile deceit as you have practised, and I defy you."

"Now I have seen thee thus, I like thee all the better for this spirit. Who would wish to win or wear a tame and over-willing heart? Thou art a very Catherine, but I will tame thee like Petruchio."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, and indeed."

"Sir Charles Marlow, you know not what you say; you know not what you have done, or would do."

"Think you so?"

"I do, and so you will find it to be."

"You shall see then ere long that I understand myself and you more than passing well," he said, smiling.

"I fear you not," she answered. "Heaven will protect me from such a villain as thou art."

"I have tamed prouder spirits than thine," said the baronet, "and yours is not of the sort to outsoar mine. I leave you now to reflection, and I have no doubt that by-and-by you will come to your senses."

"That I have done already, though, alas! at so late a moment," she replied.

He withdrew, and Emma heard the door of the drawing-room double-locked behind him; but her heart did not fail her, she even felt calmer and more self-possessed now. Her early education had taught her to place entire reliance upon divine Providence, and she knelt now and prayed fervently for fortitude and guidance in her present situation. How fervently she prayed—and her prayer was answered as we shall see.

That night, before the return of her betrayer, she had opened one of the high windows of the drawing-room, and leaped fearlessly and unharmed to the ground. From the hated towers of Marlow House, she fled with the speed of a hunted deer, and at the expiration of three days of toilsome wandering, came once more to Woodbine Cottage, to tell her sad story to her father and only protector. His Christian principles forbade his taking the revenge that his manliness at first prompted him to, and he only prayed that a wrong spirit might not actuate his heart towards one who had so foully wronged his dear child. His health was naturally delicate, and this misfortune seemed to break him down most suddenly, for a few short days and weeks only passed, before the curate slept in the village church-yard.

Sad was now the condition of the gentle Emma. She wrote to India to her lover to apprise him of his brother's conduct and her bereavement, but no answer was ever received. Another letter, sent upon the supposition that the first might have failed, elicited no reply, and with a settled melancholy upon her heart, Mrs. Marlow—for by her father's advice she had still retained the name that the law alone could justly relieve her of—adopted such industrial means as should enable her to procure a respectable livelihood, and being, unlike her mother, blessed with health and strength, she was now comparatively comfortable.

Her nominal husband never preferred a claim to her hand, well knowing that he could not sustain such a course either by law or justice. In time, a holy calm, and a sweet resignation settled over her chastened spirits, and few who witnessed her quiet demeanor, her active benevolence, her cheerful performance of her duties, could imagine that her placid exterior hid so dark and pregnant a story of the heart.

Such was Mrs. Marlow when, after the lapse of a few years, circumstances brought her in contact with Sir Robert Brompton.

CHAPTER XLIX.

LOVE AND PRIDE.

O, gentle Romeo,
If thou dost love, pronounce it faithfully;
Or, if thou think'st I am too quickly won,
I'll frown, and be perverse, and say thee, nay,
So thou wilt woo; but, else, not for the world.—SHAKSPEARE.

SUCH was the history of the kind-hearted Mrs. Marlow, who had served Sir Robert so faithfully, and who had endeared herself so much to Edith and Clara. After her early experience, she had grown to be the kind-hearted and thoughtful being that we have represented. Solicitous to do her duty, conscientious, highly respected, even by Sir Robert himself, and ever striving to do good where it was in her power, though in ever so humble a way. Mrs. Marlow was not yet forty years of age, her hair was dark and glossy, her complexion fair, and her general character of features highly pleasing. The beauty of her childhood was not yet gone, while her manners had the quiet and subdued character that might be supposed to attach itself to her situation in Sir Robert's household.

But Clara and herself were together now at the cottage, and no better companion could have been chosen for the fair but unhappy girl, than Mrs. Marlow. After the explanation that had taken place between Clara and the young curate, she had necessarily felt some delicacy in addressing him as she had done heretofore, and for this reason she turned to Mrs. Marlow, and for the first time, appeared to realize the depth of her mind, and the pure religious tone that seemed to actuate it. Indeed she seemed to have found new life in the dear companionship of her who had been so kind and thoughtful in her behalf for a long period.

Sir Robert knew nothing of his housekeeper's former life; he had become acquainted with her in some casual excursion to the cottage or neighborhood where they now resided, and had been recommended by a friend, who said he had known her father well, to engage her in the capacity which she still occupied. But Clara and herself were now thrown almost entirely upon each other for amusement, and, for the first time, Clara alluded one day to the past, and asked Mrs. Marlow about her former life. A mutual delicacy had kept them from speaking of this subject to each other, until Clara had seemed to have lost all pride, and to have grown thus dejected. Clara listened with much interest to the story which the reader is already conversant with, and in turn made Mrs. Marlow more of a confidant than she had ever done any human being before this period.

In the meantime Walter was pressing his suite in turn with the Lady Josephine.

But a new phase had been put upon this proposed connection, and the friendship of Walter—Lord Amidown having received the

large sum of money that Karl Blasius had voluntarily returned to him through Sir Robert Brompton, and had thus been enabled to pay off all demands upon him, and to once more reinstate his sister in the elegant home from whence his extravagance had at one time expelled her. Here she was again surrounded by those fair-weather friends, who had temporarily withdrawn from her society, and when they had observed the familiar manner in which she received the advances of the young East Indian, Walter Manning, they did not hesitate to inform her that she should weigh well the consequences of an intimacy that might disgrace her descent, and debar her from participating in those circles to which she had been born.

Lord Amidown's sister had gone too far already to recede, that is to say, she had lost her heart, and yet the busy-bodies who were constantly buzzing like insects in her ears, could not but affect her judgment, at least in some degree, though to do her justice, she felt that she loved Walter, and that she must always do so, let what might transpire. Walter could not help discovering this, and he shrewdly divined the cause at once. Though it made him quite unhappy, he said nothing about the matter, but continued, as far as he was permitted to do so, his attentions to her he loved.

As to Edith and Lord Amidown, they were only too happy, and the time for their union was already fixed upon. Walter was too proud to refer to the matter that we have mentioned to Josephine's brother, while he was far too much taken up with his own prospects and happiness, to scan those of Walter and his sister.

As we have already said, the young East Indian was a young man of marked and peculiar manly bearing and beauty, his figure was exceedingly graceful and attractive, added to which, his mental cultivation was of the rarest kind, and his views, and manner of discussing subjects, were exceedingly entertaining. For these qualities he was a favorite wherever he was thrown, and even in the distinguished circles which he met at Josephine's house, he was very popular at once, and indeed he became so much so as to cause quite a revolution in the state of affairs as it regarded his position with Lady Josephine.

"Say, Beverly," remarked one young gallant to another, during a party at Lady Josephine's, "this fine looking chap who is only a plain Mister, seems to carry everything before him here."

"Fact," said the other, lazily, quizzing Walter as he spoke.

"'Twas said that Lady Josephine loved the fellow, and was engaged to him, but she flies higher now her fortune has come back again. She's given him up as a lover, but she patronizes him still."

"Do you call that giving him up?" said he who had been addressed as Beverly, referring to Walter, who was now walking across the room with the finest lady in the room, chatting familiarly as she leaned upon his arm, lady Josephine all the while watching them, and biting her fan impatiently for very vexation. "Do you call that giving him up, my fine fellow? Why, gads life, she's jealous, immensely jealous."

"The waters are a little troubled, that's a fact," replied the other, regarding Lady Josephine with a smile at her earnestness.

"Troubled? it's a regular tempest."

And this was a fact, for when lady Josephine saw Walter so warmly appreciated by others, she began to review her own conduct towards him, and she saw that her heart was his, wholly his, in spite of all the cold worldly considerations that her officious friends adduced to persuade her to the contrary, and she would have given worlds, had they been at her control, to revoke the little coolness that had already been evinced by her towards Walter Manning. She felt uneasy, unhappy, miserable, and out of conceit with everybody.

In the meantime, Walter studied her character well, though he did not seem to do so. He pretended much devotion to a young heiress named Lambeth, a titled lady, rich and beautiful, and she, forsooth, seemed greatly smitten with him. They were very intimate, much together, and agreed charmingly, and many a broad hint was thrown out in Lady Josephine's hearing as to their regard for each other. Of course, all this was like throwing sparks among dried chips, and only set her jealousy in a blaze.

Lady Lambeth was but little over twenty years of age, but she was possessed of remarkable penetration of judgment, and a rare

knowledge of the human heart for one so young. She had made Walter's acquaintance at the Amidowns, with great satisfaction to herself, because she saw how different he was from the herd of gaudy butterflies that generally followed in her suit. His plain, unaffected, yet highly refined manner was a rara avis in her circle, and altogether she felt that she could have respected and loved him for life, had she not discovered that he was already bespoken for Lady Josephine. But her feelings led her to a close watchfulness of Walter in his intercourse with her friend, and she soon discovered the true state of affairs. Appreciating, as she did, the manly character of the young East Indian, she resolved to serve him if it was in her power to do so.

She could easily realize, in her keen discernment, how Lady Josephine was affected in the matter; she saw that at heart she loved Walter truly, and that Walter too loved her as sincerely, and she thought that she could serve the interests of both. It was not, however, by going to Josephine Amidown and arguing with her; no, no, she knew the human heart too well for that, she must apply herself to some other mode of procedure, and she accordingly laid her plans quietly, but shrewdly.

"Mr. Manning," she said to him, as she leaned familiarly upon his arm, "you love Lady Josephine?"

"Lady, yes, if it be proper for me to acknowledge it to another."

"Her friends have been trying to influence her, I know, against the match that her heart would lead her to. She lacks the resolution to make herself happy, and to take the necessary steps in spite of the interference of others."

"You are very frank, madam," said Walter, not a little surprised at the manner and subject of her conversation.

"It is my way, Mr. Manning. Believe me to be your friend, and Josephine's also, and govern yourself by my suggestions for a short time, and I will warrant you perfect success in your suit with her."

"I know not how to thank you for such disinterested kindness, Lady Lambeth. It will by my pride to obey you in everything, and to improve any suggestion you may be pleased to make."

"That is right. I see you will be an apt pupil. Now, give me your arm, if you please, thus. We are going over to examine the picture opposite; excuse me if I lean rather *heavily*," she continued, smiling.

This conversation had taken place in Lord Amidown's drawing-room, and though the tones of voice were too low to be overheard by a third party, yet Lady Josephine saw the intimacy, and marked it well. Walter did not require to force his spirits in order to appear interested and vivacious with the pretty, refined heiress, who leaned so familiarly upon his arm; his blood was all on fire at the intimacy and tender glances that she lavished upon him, in spite of the fact that he could realize they were intended solely for effect upon Lady Josephine. But she was so entertaining, so handsome, so high-bred and accomplished, that Walter was completely dazzled, and almost forgetting Lady Josephine, he played the part that was assigned to him with a truthfulness that ere a fortnight had passed, had in more than one instance drawn forth a truthful sigh from Lady Lambeth. Indeed she found that where she had intended to play a fictitious part, she had very nearly become in earnest, and she could not but acknowledge that, under other circumstances, she should have been desperately in love with Walter.

Matters were in this state at the time when the scene occurred of which the two gallants, Beverly and his friend, had spoken in the drawing-room, and when Lady Josephine's manner had been so marked as to attract their attention.

As to Walter, he found himself, to use a familiar term, in clover. The Lady Lambeth was so attentive that the part he played was not feigned; he was almost, if not quite, in earnest, and this Lady Josephine saw most clearly, and on the occasion referred to, retired to her private room to cry with vexation over the feelings that she realized after observing the conduct we have described.

A few weeks of this familiarity had brought matters into such a situation, that they required an explanation. Lady Josephine felt that she could bear this state of suspense no longer, besides which Lady Lambeth appeared to be more and more familiar every day with Walter, and indeed comments from others began to reach her ears concerning this.

The gay saloon was cleared at last one

night, after a more than usually brilliant evening, and Walter, either by accident or design, seemed to be the very last person to withdraw, and when he approached Lady Josephine to take leave, his observant eye told him at once that the crisis had come, and that the present moment must make or mar his future relation to her.

"Mr. Manning!"

"Lady Josephine!"

A most embarrassing silence ensued for nearly a minute, in which the lady stood with her eyes riveted upon the carpet, and Walter almost trembled to hear what she would say. He loved her tenderly, and his heart had often rebuked him for the part that he felt Lady Lambeth was causing him to personate; and yet how could he longer continue his attentions, when he saw them coldly received, as they had been, while the object of them was influenced by the arguments of her aristocratic friends.

"Walter," she repeated.

He marked the change in her mode of address, and his heart beat quickly at this evidence of interest, while he drew still nearer to her side.

"Have I offended you?"

"Offended me, lady?"

"Yes, that you should have so avoided me of late."

Ah! Lady Josephine, do you think that I have voluntarily done this?"

"How else, Walter, could it be? Surely you are your own master."

"Not in your presence, lady. If I have happened to avoid you, it has only been because I thought the attention which I tendered was no longer acceptable. Since we were so intimate, lady, there has been a great change in your prospects, and, perhaps, as change brings change, your feelings are not the same that I had supposed them once."

"Walter, it is you who are changed. You love the Lady Lambeth." As she said this, she burst into a flood of tears; her feelings seemed to have become uncontrollable.

"Are these tears for me?" he asked, gently soothing her agitation. "Ah! Josephine, do you still love me?"

"Walter, you know that I do."

"Then, believe me, dearest, I love you, and as devotedly as ever before."

The spell was broken, and for them to sit down together there, and scan the past, mutually forgiving and explaining, was the most natural thing in the world. The lady acknowledged frankly the influence that had been brought to bear upon her, and that all the while she heeded these heartless promptings, she was unhappy.

"Nothing, dear Josephine, shall part us again, now that we thoroughly understand each other," he said, pressing her hand tenderly within his own.

She could only answer his appeal by silence; but the confiding manner, the clear sunshine of joy that chased away the tears from her face, were more eloquent than words. What though "the course of true love never does run smooth," the very difficulties and troubles that are encountered but add zest to the final attainment of the soul's desire. 'Tis not the object most easily won that is most prized, but rather that which costs us labor, and mayhap even pain and anxiety to call our own.

Thus it was with both Walter and Josephine; they were even happier now that the rainbow had arched the broad heaven of their love, than they would have been had no intervening clouds for a moment obscured the brilliancy of their hopes.

Of course, Lady Lambeth soon realized this, and though she said nothing, yet once she did give Walter a look of intelligence that he could not but understand, and on his part he took occasion to acknowledge to her that she had done him such a favor as no one else might have done, and that his heart would ever acknowledge the indebtedness. As Lady Lambeth gave him her hand to kiss, after the close of this gratuitous service on her part, Walter *felt it tremble slightly* within his own, their eyes met, and he saw that their intimacy had ceased not one moment too soon for the happiness of both!

CHAPTER L.

THE TRIAL.

Cease, triflers; would you have me feel remorse!
Leave me alone—nor cell, nor chain, nor dungeons,
Speak to the murderer with the voice of solitude.—MATURIN'S BERTRAM.

WHILE Clara was tending flowers and petting little sparrows at Haredale, while Walter was threading the mazy paths of love, now coquetting with Lady Lambeth, and now reviewing his past promises with Lady Josephine, while Lord Amidown and Edith were quietly enjoying the sweets of each other's society, and while Sir Robert Brompton divided his attention equally among them all, now moralizing with Clara, and now driving out in the Park with Edith—we say while all these matters were transpiring, Karl Blasius lay immured in his gloomy cell, dejected and miserable.

Months have passed since we first saw him there—weary, long and trying months to him, and most wretchedly had he become reduced by the physical suffering, caused by want of fresh air and exercise, and the far more bitter gnawings of conscience. When he had been confined at Armantz, and from whence he so signally escaped, he was a much younger man, his spirits were more pliant, and rebounded again from the occasional depression that overcame him. But now he was older—older in years, and older in sin; his conscience carried a heavier weight now, and he felt at times as though he could not long survive this accumulation of miseries.

And yet, for all this, he cherished hopes of soon being released from his unhappy confinement, and once more feeling himself free to go where he would. How he envied the doves that filled the prison cots, as he saw them wheel about their little open doors, and feeding their young, dash out again, and fly away far off over the prison top, free and unrestrained. He had succeeded in enticing a pair of them to come daily to his grated window, where he fed them! Ay, this fierce and bloody man would watch now impatiently for the hour to come when the doves would eat of the food saved from his prison fare!

Strange how circumstances may change the heart of man; he was as gentle with these doves as a little child would have been; his arm that had been raised so often to spill his brother's blood, was as light as a woman's now, as it smoothed the glossy plumage of his feathered pets, and there was ever an answering response within his breast when the doves turned their eyes up to look into his face, after they had eaten of his scanty fare. Yes, thus it really was—Heaven had left some

of the angel still in that dark and guilty man's heart. The half effaced image of his Maker still was there!

He was allowed no recreation, no books, no employment, but seemed doomed to a terrible idleness that was fearful, because it turned his mind so continually and actively in upon himself. He envied the joy of convict laborers who passed sometimes within his sight on their way to break stones, for they had employment—their minds were occupied. He looked back upon his confinement at Armantz, with regret that he was not able now to be as happy even as he then was. His jailer rarely vouchsafed a word to him, and his tongue half forgot its office.

A spider that had weaved its nest across the topmost corner of his grated window, was an object as minutely watched in all his doings, as though the prisoner's very life depended upon the little insect. The spider seemed at last to know him, and not to hasten to the deep crevice and hide itself when he drew near, but kept busily spinning its infinite number of threads, so fine that the robber could only discover them by taking into view a large number at a glance One day he fell asleep, with one hand upon the bar, and the spider stung him, and this brought to his mind a strange train of thoughts.

His hand became swollen, and painful, but it seemed to be a mental relief to him, and he would not apply for any medicines or bandages for it, but watched the subtle working of the poison, and studied its course in each stage. It was occupation, even bearing the pain, which at times was most acute,and relieved his mind from the fearful and never-ceasing wakeful dreams that oppressed it. The virus having at last exhausted itself, by being taken up, and becoming absorbed in the system, the hand became once more well.

Thus, as we have said, months passed over the robber's head, and the date drew near when it had been intimated to him that his trial would take place. Sir Robert had twice called upon him during this period, once in relation to the care of the ill gotten wealth, which had been secreted by the robber, and this had been properly disposed of, as the rooms he had occupied for his mystic purposes were now engaged to other tenants. He had also procured respectable counsel for the robber, that he might not lack for a proper and reasonable legal defence, in behalf of his life.

The lawyer thus retained had visited him, and satisfied himself on all the necessary points, as it regarded the prisoner's defence, and as he could do nothing more until he was aware of what witnesses and charges would be brought, he had not deemed it necessary further to consult with his client, and therefore the robber had seen him but once; and now that the day was so near at hand, he felt a natural desire to consult him more fully upon a matter affecting, as this did, his life. But the day appointed for his trial came before he met his counsel again, and then it was in court.

After a brief conversation with him, the jury was summoned, and Karl Blasius was put upon his trial, by the name of William Lancewood. He refused of course to answer to this name,declaring that it was not his rightful one, but the prosecuting attorney said that he expected to be able to show that although the prisoner might have many aliases, this was the one by which he was at least the best known among his companions, though the public had known him best as Madame Duval, the fortune-teller. This matter being disposed of to the satisfaction of the court, the trial then commenced in earnest.

At first, evidence was adduced showing that the prisoner and the so-styled Madame Duval were one and the same, and to prove this, it was only necessary to summon the policemen who had arrested him. Thus, at the outset, the robber's case received an almost fatal blow. He found by the reading, that he was charged with murder,or rather an attempt to commit murder, but where this was to be applied or localized,he could not conceive. True,he had murdered Hardhead, but "dead men tell no lies," and who could suspect him in a matter wherein he had acted so openly, and which he had himself laid before the police?

Several hours were occupied in points of evidence, when at last a first witness was summoned. The robber could not see his face until he had assumed the witness's stand, and had sworn the usual oath, when he turned to face in part, the jury, the two counsel, and the prisoner. As he did so, the robber rose to his feet, in amazement; he could not be-

lieve his eyes, and as he stood there, he rubbed them again and again, and gazed more intently, when he seemed to sink into his seat again, as though perfect despair had taken possession of his soul, and his head dropped upon his breast, as if he had become lifeless!

The witness who was thus brought to confront him there, was Hardhead!

No wonder that the robber felt himself so thoroughly lost. He realized, even in the midst of his wonder at seeing his supposed victim alive, how thoroughly Hardhead knew him and his guilty habits. He was a host of evidence within himself, for he had witnessed over half the most daring burglaries which he had committed in London, besides showing in his own person sufficient to condemn the prisoner, in relation to his attempt upon the witness's life. The fact was, Hardhead had turned state's evidence against Karl Blasius, in revenge for that fearful night's work.

The evidence elicited from Hardhead, was of the clearest and most satisfactory character. He told a plain and straight-forward story, for he felt that the truth was bad enough, and that he could scarcely render it darker by falsehood. He related the life of the robber from the period when our story opens, up to the very day of his arrest, but more he did not know, save that he had heard the prisoner tell of some daring piratical scenes in the Spanish Indies, in which, according to his own admission, he had participated. The jury listened attentively, and appeared to believe all that Hardhead uttered.

Being called upon to explain the fact of his not losing his life at the time that he was supposed to be dead, he showed that he had scarcely been brought to the dead house before the air and motion that he had encountered, revived him so that he could make a motion, and this being observed, a surgeon was sent for directly, and proper means being adopted and vigorously applied, he was in a few hours quite relieved from danger. His suspicions were aroused, and he divulged them to the police, who at once procured a warrant for the robber's arrest.

At first, it could not exactly be discovered what means had been used to produce the state in which Hardhead was conveyed to the dead house, but the police who arrested the robber, noted a few bits of charcoal that appeared to have fallen upon, and burned the chamber floor, and also discovered the small hand furnace. These facts, coupled with the observation of the surgeon, as to the insensibility that had been produced, led them at least to believe that the robber had placed charcoal in the room for the object of ridding himself of a dangerous witness.

"Had you any words with the prisoner on that night before retiring?" asked one of the jury of Hardhead.

"Yes, we had a dispute about some money matters, and I threatened to expose him if he didn't share the profits he had made—for I knowed he had lots of gold secreted somewhere in the place."

The jury looked significantly at each other, as they seemed to sum up in their minds the various links of the evidence which they had heard. Hardhead was dismissed from the stand, and the defence was opened by the counsel for the prisoner. He was rather a young man, but had obtained considerable reputation for shrewdness and legal cunning, and Sir Robert had secured his services with the promise of a liberal fee of a thousand pounds if he would succeed in clearing the prisoner, for he wished to have him liberated, and permitted to retire to his own country, to repent and become fit for death.

This was an unusually large fee, and tempted the cupidity of the young lawyer, who, therefore, resolved if possible, to prove his client innocent, at least to the satisfaction of the jury, and being himself well satisfied of his guilt after a few moments' conversation with him, he found, that let the evidence be what it might, his reliance must not be in any assistance the robber could afford him in strengthening his case, but that he must rely solely upon his own inventive powers, and the application of the shrewd points and bearings of his profession.

The charges preferred by the prosecuting attorney seemed to be fully substantiated, all save the attempt upon Hardhead's life, which was the main thing upon which the action was brought, and that was strongly sustained by a chain of circumstances. There was the testimony of the physician, as to the effect produced upon Hardhead, which he unhesitatingly pronounced to be most likely to have

been caused by the gas of burning charcoal, and then, to corroborate this idea, there were the bits of charcoal found upon the floor, and the furnace also in which the coals might have been ignited.

This chain of evidence, and the fact of the dispute that had passed between the prisoner and Hardhead, were forcibly dwelt upon by the prosecuting attorney. He labored to show the former character of the prisoner in its most odious light, called the attention of the jury to the fact of his having played upon the credulity of the public for so long a period, under the name of Duval, pretending to afford information of a superhuman character, and in short, did not seem to let any chance for sarcasm or bitterness escape him, but poured out his accumulated charges and anathemas upon the prisoner's head, with excited earnestness.

Not so with the robber's counsel; he was cool and collected. He had allowed the prosecution to go on to every extreme that was attempted, and had not once used his prerogative to check them where he thought them to be exceeding the spirit of the law, and thus permitted to go on, the prosecuting attorney had more than once, though a most able man, made points that might have been easily declared inadmissible as evidence against the prisoner, had his counsel challenged them before the court; but this was not the case, and the prosecution went through its entire course, unchecked and undisputed.

The jury even thought that the prisoner did not have a fair chance for his life through his counsel, and thus a half defined sympathy was aroused in their breasts in his behalf. They began to wonder what he could say, after letting so much go against his client. Though he was now fully possessed of the government plan and manner of charging his client, they could know nothing of his mode of defence, and therefore could take no fair means to defeat or disprove the validity of what he might say. This state of things created no small interest among the jury, judges, and counsel, when, at this moment, the prisoner's counsel rose to speak.

He was, as we have before remarked, a young man, but he had studied the art of producing effect upon a jury—one of the greatest secrets of his profession. He had rejoiced within himself at the excited and passionate spirit of the prosecution; he had not regretted the illegal points that had been made, for all these were a mine of strength in the defence, and by his rigid contrast to the heated manner of the prosecution, he would be able to produce a far more decided effect than he could have done had the trial on their part been conducted with calmness.

He rose with a quiet, calm self-possession, that said upon the face of it, as a confident smile lighted up his features, that he considered all that had been said and done as weighing not one farthing against the case. He bowed respectfully to the court, the jury, and the crowd of his professional brethren that thronged the court-room, at this interesting moment.

With the most deliberate intonations of voice and the most distinct articulation, he commenced by saying boldly, with his clear, handsome eye fixed upon the jury, that not one item of evidence had yet been adduced to prove the guilt of his client. He told the jury that he would not trespass so much upon their patience as to take up the extraordinary points made by the prosecution, and attempting to disprove them, one by one, he would annul them altogether. He called upon the jury to mark the character of the hardened villain who had been brought there to swear away another's life, and the prosecution had even taken the pains to show that he did so after a personal quarrel with the prisoner!

He referred the jury, one by one, to the illegal points made by the government, and showed them so plainly, and showered them down upon the prosecuting attorney's head in such profusion, that he writhed under the infliction. He said that he had not come there to couch a lance against any one, nor to lose his temper in arguing his cause: his case did not require any vehemence to propagate it, but he would call the attention of the court and the jury to a few remarks which he desired to make, and which he should substantiate by competent witnesses.

He then commenced a clear, calm, but powerful argument against circumstantial evidence; he even startled the jury by the number and thrilling character of the incidents he related, from undoubted authority, showing how many innocent persons had been ex-

ecuted upon the strength of this species of evidence. He drew pictures, related cases, and stated facts, in such an array and strength, as to astonish the older members of the profession about him. The court-room was all the while as still as death. The jury looked at each other in amazement, and their faces evinced as much hesitation now, as it regarded the case before them, as they had done of confidence during the remarks of the prosecuting attorney. The keen sighted young lawyer saw, and improved this advantage; he was not addressing himself solely to a panel of jurors, but he was working upon their convictions—he was moulding their belief and fancy to serve his own purpose. As he saw them gradually receive and credit his remarks, he grew more decided, until he had brought them, step by step, to the point where they were ready to receive assertion for argument, and then he changed his tactics.

Now he launched forth on another branch of evidence. He told the jury that he should not attempt to refute in detail what he could annul altogether, and he boldly declared that he could prove Hardhead to have fallen down in the street in a fit on that night on which the indictment charged the prisoner with having attempted to kill him, and he called four persons to swear to this, who declared that at a certain hour, which each one fixed by some attending circumstance, they had seen Hardhead lying in the street, as though he were dead, but by the copious use of water and external friction, he was revived sufficiently to go on his way, unaided.

This was the only evidence that he wished to introduce; his client was brought there to be tried upon an indictment relating to an attempt to murder; no other charge had been legally brought against him, though the prosecution, feeling the weakness of the case, had gone back and attempted to show the prisoner to have been a villain almost from his cradle. But what had this to do with the indictment? That was all he desired to refute—a charge that was legally brought: neither the court nor the jury had aught to do with any other consideration; this their honors upon the bench would sustain him in most fully.

He then wanted to know, when it was clearly proved that the man known as Hardhead had been seen in a fit the evening before the day when he had been conveyed to the dead house, who was prepared to say that his second fit, from which he had recovered as described, was not produced by the same cause as the one that had occurred in the street? Was it likely that a man guilty of his supposed murder, would have gone, as the prisoner did, at the moment of his discovering it, and declare the fact of his death to the proper authorities? He left this question for the jury to settle in their own minds; he should draw no inference for them—the case was too clear for a doubt.

The calm air of confidence, so different from the heated manner of the attorney for the prosecution, had great weight with the jury—they were half inclined in his favor before he had spoken five minutes. The judge even seemed to waver when he summed up the evidence, and charged the jury—he could not overrule any point made by the prisoner's counsel. He had been wary and cautious in all he had asserted, and all he had done, and finally the jury retired for the consideration of the guilt or innocence of the prisoner at the bar.

In the meantime, Karl Blasius had sat with watchful eagerness, carefully drinking in every word that his counsel uttered. When he had heard of the manner of Hardhead's revival, he no longer wondered at seeing him there, but the plea that was put in, proving a fit as having occurred to Hardhead before he saw him on that eventful night, was new to him! He studied the expressive countenances of the jury, as they listened to the eloquent and convincing remarks of his counsel, and when they had retired to consult upon the verdict, he fell to musing on all this singular business, and realized after all, how little real justice there is in law, since a feather's weight may turn the scale either way, and innocence suffer, or transgression go unscourged. Nor was he far from correct in his inference.

But the jury were soon in their seats again, and through the foreman, ready to declare their verdict. The usual form was observed. The judge called upon them for their answer to the guilt or innocence of the prisoner at the bar, when the foreman replied in a clear, distinct voice:

"NOT GUILTY!"

CHAPTER LI.

THE RETRIBUTION.

Take my *esteem*, if you on that can live ;
But frankly, sir, 'tis all I have to give. DRYDEN.

THE country seat of Sir Charles Marlow was a rich specimen of the style in which the English gentry formerly lived. Its yards were spacious, its parks and preserves ample and thrifty, and the old trees about the ancestral mansion itself, looked like huge giants set to guard the Marlow domain. The present representative of the family, who has already appeared upon these pages in so unfavorable a light, was hardly worthy to sustain the reputation of so goodly a stock as he had sprung from. He was an imperious, self-willed man, and though his table never lacked plenty of jovial attendants from the country round, yet they came more for the good things the table bore and for the pleasure of meeting each other, than for the sake of the host himself.

To-day was devoted to a fox hunt, to-morrow, perhaps to a race, and the next, maybe, to gambling in some way. The cold, selfish master of the domain, made every one subservient to his will, and lived in all things as though life was created alone for him, and as if all those persons who breathed the air in common with him, were intended to administer to his pleasure.

At the age of forty-five, Sir Charles by accident met with a young and beautiful girl, not far from his own home. Her parents were poor, but respectable, and she being an only child, had shared all the advantages for improvement that were possibly to be obtained through the limited means and humble influence of her father. Fanny Hardway's beauty was of just that blooming, yet retiring character, that would attract such a man as Sir Charles Marlow. He saw and loved her at once. The cunning baronet was already too well experienced in those matters to be hasty or indiscreet. He in the first place, secured the good will and approbation of her parents by a few well-bestowed favors; but Fanny herself, he saw was not to be so easily won, even by a baronet.

The truth was, the humble girl had a lover already among her own class, one with whom she had already exchanged promises of love and constancy, though this was unknown to her parents. Sir Charles's constant visits seemed to delight the simple father and mother of Fanny, while they greatly distressed the young girl. He daily grew more familiar, but she could only extend to him a careful and studied politeness, for she did not dare to thwart his advances boldly. She was young, not yet twenty, her father was ill, their means were daily becoming exhausted, and Fanny saw that she was expected by her parents to sacrifice herself in order to give them bread. She looked upon the bent form of her father, who

had never denied her anything in his life, and upon the anxious face of a mother, the larger portion of whose life had been expended in caring for and bringing her up, and she said:

"It is but one little struggle and all is over, and by the sacrifice I shall gain comfort and plenty to their future share. How can I hesitate even for a moment to decide in my own mind, when I see that their happiness depends upon my marrying Sir Charles?"

But her heart beat heavily, and the deep sighs that escaped her incontinently now and then, came from the very depths of her young breast. Edward Manley knew very well the course of reasoning that had brought Fanny to consent in her own mind to the attentions of the rich baronet, and miserable as this made him, still he could not but admire her the more for the self-sacrificing willingness with which she yielded all to her parents, and sold her own happiness even, to buy them bread. Bitter, ah! how bitter was their meeting one night alone, and unseen by any other human eye. Fanny's grief was resolved to show itself once, and she wept like a child, while Edward told her, after all else, that at least she had the sweet assurance of affording her parents protection and support for life.—He was himself as poor as Fanny, therefore he could not bring to her or them any exchange for her hand, except the warm and honest heart, a gift richer than the glittering pile Sir Charles promised them.

"I may love you still?" whispered Edward Manley, entreatingly.

"Nay, Edward, it would be wicked to love the wife of another."

"And I must see thee thus borne away by this baronet for want of the *means* to support ourselves and parents. Alas! that fortune should have dealt so hardly with us."

And so indeed it was; there was no other way for Fanny to do, provided she counted her parents' wants and comforts as weighing aught in the scale, and as Sir Charles renewed, each time he came to the cottage, his warm assurance of love and devotion, Fanny had at last learned to receive them with downcast eyes and silent acquiescence, at least as far as appearances were concerned.

The baronet really loved her; when he had carried away Emma, and by deceit made her Mrs. Marlow, he had been tempted by his passions, not his love. Now his heart, or at least what heart he had left, was touched, and as the proper period transpired before the proposed union should take place, the cold, selfish man felt the chastening influence upon his heart of the love that actuated it. It changed in no small degree his habits and feelings, and those about him were surprised at witnessing deeds of liberal charity and unusual kindness. The truth was, that so potent is love, it will purify and bleach even the hardest heart.

In the meantime the wedding-day was appointed, and arrangements were made to give the neighboring country folks a liberal and jovial entertainment on the occasion of Sir Charles's union with one of their own class.

Edward Manley could remain in the vicinity of Fanny no longer, now that the day was affixed which was to make her Sir Charles's wife. He therefore bade her a tender farewell, and left his native place to seek for employment elsewhere.

Already had Sir Charles offered to purchase the cottage and lands, for which Fanny's father was obliged to pay so much rent as to keep him constantly embarrassed, and to present it to them, but the father refused all such assistance now. He said that when Sir Charles became his son-in-law, if he chose to lend him an aiding hand, it was all very well, and would be very acceptable, but it looked, he said, too much like selling his child, to receive such a favor before he parted with her. However, Mark Hardway awoke one morning and found upon his table that the cottage and land, with all right and title, had been transfered to his name, and the papers making the whole property his own were in his hand.—No donor appeared, or was named. Of course, he presumed it came from Sir Charles, but he knew not, and this being the case, the family found themselves on a happy and comfortable pecuniary footing.

Fanny grew pale and thin, and her mother felt that her daughter was far from being happy.

The day approached when the victim was to be sacrificed, and finally, Fanny having, in accordance with what she deemed to be her duty, consented to give her hand to Sir Charles Marlow, the village church was prepared for the ceremony. The little altar was

dressed with fragrant flowers, and the sexton was seen all day running and bustling about, full of importance and business. Every niche and corner was decorated again and again, and there was no portion of duty that was not done twice over in his anxiety to do the best he could.

Little boys and girls lingered about the church door as the hour for the ceremony approached, and Cato, as he was called—a poor half-witted being, who came from no one knew where, but who had been cared for by the villagers these fifteen years—leaned against the door and watched with a half-foolish, half-thoughtful eye, the proceedings of those who prepared the church. Some folks thought him without any wits at all, but those who were kind to him, and Fanny was among that number, knew better.

This weak minded boy—he was scarcely more than a boy—seemed unusually troubled and uneasy as the hour approached for the wedding. He walked quickly backward and forward like a dumb animal that seeks to find some relief from a pressing annoyance. Four fifths of the villagers who had canvassed the proposed connection in the usual gossipping style, had come to the conclusion that Fanny was very glad indeed, and very much to be envied that she should be able to make a match so much above her own sphere. The other portion said it was an ill assorted match, but probably a love one.

Strange that out of them all, this poor fool, as he was called, should have best read the young girl's heart. He sighed, ay, and now the hour had nearly come, he cried too!—Fanny had always been his friend, she gave him food and clothes, but more than all, she was kind and gentle to him, and he loved her—O, how much the poor half-witted creature loved that kind-hearted girl. In spite of all his simplicity, he knew that she was unhappy, though Fanny breathed no word of complaint to any one; itwasnot her way to do so. Edward only knew her heart; her parents could only see the picture that their fancy drew of a comfortable and even splendid home for their child, and a happy setout for life.

Poor Cato knew that although Fanny was going to a proud, rich mansion, that her heart went not with her, and as he walked back and forth by the door of the village church, now and then a strange dark feeling came over him, as though he would like to leap upon Sir Charles Marlow, and, clutching his throat, kill him! Such thoughts as these filled the poor creature's breast as the marriage corteg'e approached.

They were all there; the proud baronet and his village bride, the curate, the parents, the friends—strangely mingled from the gentry and the humble peasantry—altogether filed in by the poor half-witted boy, until as the last one brought up the rear, he stole in also, and posted himself in a corner where he could see and hear all that was done in the little church.

The ceremony was performed with all the details to that part where the curate asks the usual questions; that relating to the bans is repeated three times. It had already been distinctly uttered twice, when the clatter of horses' feet rang over the road, and the people in the little church were startled by the noise of one rushing up the aisle, and in the next moment a voice cried aloud:

"I forbid the bans!"

In order to render our story plainer, we turn with the reader now and follow Edward Manley, who had been driven to leave his childhood's home by the unhappy force of the circumstances referred to. He could not bear to stay and see the choice of his heart become the wife of another; indeed he felt that it was best for them both that he should not do so.—He was humble in means, and must be industrious even to enable him to procure the necessities of life, and he hoped, too, by assiduous application to drive away in part the bitter reflections that now flooded his heart.

Edward Manley, in his wanderings in search of employment, came at last to Haredale, where he engaged with Sir Robert Brompton, whom he chanced to meet, to attend to the garden and grounds generally of the cottage.

"You will pay all regard to the wants of the house. I am frequently in town myself for some days at a time."

"Yes, sir."

"Do as well as you can, and be industrious, and I doubt not I shall like you well," said Sir Robert, encouragingly.

"I will try, sir."

"Mrs. Marlow will—"

"Who, sir?" asked the new gardener, with a startled energy.

"Who? Why, I was about to speak of the housekeeper," he replied; "is there anything remarkable in that to surprise you?"

"No, sir, but you called her name, sir?" suggested Edward, respectfully.

"I did—Mrs. Marlow."

"Any relation to Sir Charles Marlow, in the east county, sir?" asked Edward, with evident interest depicted in his face.

"I know not; and yet Marlow is not a common name." "It is a little queer," thought Sir Robert, to himself, "that I never thought to ask Mrs. Marlow about her birth—I will do so sometime."

At this moment, Clara approached them where they stood together in the garden, when Sir Robert turned carelessly, to satisfy the curiosity that had sprung up in his own breast, and asked her:

"Is Mrs. Marlow any relation of the Marlow family of east county, Clara?"

Clara was startled by this question, which she feared involved the disclosure of Mrs. Marlow's confidence to her, and yet she did not know that what she had told her was considered a secret exactly, for at the time of its occurrence years before, it must have been generally known. She therefore answered Sir Robert that there was a very peculiar relationship existing between her and Sir Charles Marlow, which she could explain to him if he desired. Saying which Sir Robert turned from Edward Manley, and drawing Clara's arm within his own, strolled away down one of the paths to hear what she had to communicate relative to the subject of Mrs. Marlow's relationship to Sir Charles Marlow.

But Edward Manley had heard enough to excite his curiosity; he remembered when a boy to have heard of some illegal transaction between Sir Charles and a young girl whom he married, or was said to have run away with, but who afterwards ran away from him, and there seemed to be something whispering at his heart that all this concerned himself in some way. He felt as though he ought to understand the matter at any rate, and when Sir Robert returned, after hearing Clara's story of the housekeeper, he resolved to ask him not to consider him impertinent if he should inquire more fully as to what relationship Mrs. Marlow was to Sir Charles. And as Sir Robert came up, he did so.

"Why do you feel so much curiosity about the matter, young man?" asked Sir Robert, interested in the feelings he observed the new gardener to possess, more particularly since the story which had just heard from Clara.

After a few moments' hesitation, young Manley seemed to take courage, and resolved to tell his story to Sir Robert, in whom he thought he discovered one who would befriend him as far as it was possible. He therefore told him what had driven him from his native place to seek employment elsewhere; he told him of his love for Fanny Hardway, and that Sir Charles Marlow was the successful rival who was that very day to bear Fanny a bride to his proud mansion.

"Does she love him?" asked Sir Robert, hastily, "or is your regard mutual?"

"Ah! sir, we have been pledged to each other for years," replied Edward Manley.

"And she marries him, as you say, from a sense of duty in her parents' behalf?"

"That is the only consideration that influences her to marry Sir Charles."

"Then the marriage shall not take place," said Sir Robert, confidently.

"It is too late to prevent it now, sir. They are a dozen leagues from here, and this afternoon is fixed upon for the wedding."

Sir Robert's mind seemed to be made up in one instant, and he resolved to befriend the young couple at all hazards.

"Look you, my fine fellow, you best know whether you have told me the truth about the matter, or not—if you have done so, I will be your friend; in the stable back of the cottage, there is a large gray horse—he is strong, well trained, and fleet; saddle him, and if you do not reach Sir Charles Marlow before the ceremony be performed, it will be your own fault. At the proper moment, forbid the bans—say that you require but a few hours to give legal reasons why the marriage should not take place. Say no more than this, and I will be there to-morrow with evidence that will sustain you, but which it will probably be unnecessary to adduce. Do you understand me fully?"

"Perfectly, sir; I know well enough what to do, but I know not what to *say* to you who have thus befriended me."

"Hasten—there is no time to be lost. Here, take this purse, saddle the gray horse, and be gone at once."

Edward Manley required no more urging, but with a muttered acknowledgment that only served to show how thankful he was, without giving articulation to any distinct utterance, he sought the stable, and was mounted and upon the road so quickly as to give promise to Sir Robert that he needed no urging to prompt him. A cloud of dust followed his horse's heels, and soon shut him out from view of those at the cottage.

Sir Robert entered the library of his country house, and seating himself, as he reflected upon this queer business, he could not but feel surprised at the chance which had brought Edward Manley to him, and at such an opportune moment, He knew the family of Marlow by reputation, but the idea had never entered his head to inquire before that day as to his housekeeper's story. Having resolved to assist young Manley in relation to his love for Fanny Hardway, he now perfected his plan. In the first place, he drew up a brief paper for Mrs. Marlow to sign, testifying to the truth of her having been married to Sir Charles Marlow, and this she readily did, more particularly when she understood the object of the paper which Sir Robert explained to her.

"There is to be a singular finale to this story, between Sir Charles Marlow and yourself," said Sir Robert.

"So far as I can be the means of preventing another's unhappiness, I am very glad," said the kind-hearted Mrs. Marlow; "but I have long since forgiven Sir Charles in my own heart for the wrong he would have done me years ago."

"Yours is a good heart, Mrs. Marlow, and would not revenge itself, I know; but we must not see these young people I have befriended suffer while we can prevent it. It may be, and indeed is most likely, that I shall be compelled only to show this paper to Sir Charles himself, without in any other way making its contents known. He will dread exposure and give her up."

"I trust it may be thus, for both his sake and mine," she said, quietly, though evidently with much feeling.

"Trust to my discretion, my good Mrs. Marlow, and I will do all for the best," answered Sir Robert Brompton.

"I will, sir—for you have always been a true friend to me," replied Mrs. Marlow, with honest meaning.

"If I have been kind to you, I have been doubly repaid in the same coin," answered Sir Robert. "But I must not stop to talk now: time is precious, until I join my young friend, Edward Manley."

Saying which, Sir Robert gathered up the important paper that Mrs. Marlow had just signed, and ordered a vehicle at once.

Thus reinforced, Sir Robert repaired at once to Fanny's parents, and on the following day, when the nature of the evidence which Edward Manley brought to prevent the marriage of Sir Charles was made known, the baron stayed all further proceedings, declaring humbly that it was a just retribution upon him for the part he had played so many years before toward Emma Warden, the curate's daughter.

CHAPTER LII.

THE SOLDIER.

My conscience has a thousand several tongues,
And every tongue brings in a several tale,
And every tale condemns me for a villain.—SHAKSPEARE.

FROM the moment that Edward Manley leaping from his horse, dashed into the little church, and declared that he forbade the bans, also that he required but a few hours to show why Sir Charles could not legally marry Fanny, the baron's heart sank within his breast. His happy expectations for many weeks past, had changed the entire current of his life; the chase had no longer any charms for him, the race course had lost its power of attraction, and he loathed the wine cup. For the first time in his life, he was really in love. Like most men of his class, his amours had been numerous, but never before were the sympathies of his breast engaged. In fact, it had been doubtful until now, if Sir Charles had any heart at all—but the simple-minded, pure village maiden had won his love, and conquered all his pride.

We say from the moment that Edward Manley stayed the ceremony, the baron became an altered man—he seemed to have a presentiment that Sir Robert had full power to prevent the marriage, and he scarcely took the trouble to inquire the character of the evidence brought against him. Had not his *heart* been interested, he might have even contested the case, and insisted upon the consummation of his wishes; but the very affection which he bore for Fanny completely unmanned him, and he seemed more like a child than like the proud Sir Charles Marlow. It is a long road that has no back turning, says the old proverb: Sir Charles had been to the extreme point that his imperious self-will could indicate, and now it was time for the unbending of the freely bent bow.

What a relief was all this to Fanny—she had followed a conscientious sense of duty in what she had done, and Providence itself had seemed to intervene, as with Abraham of old, to prevent the willing sacrifice.

"Why, Edward, how was it possible that you should have become acquainted with the good Sir Robert Brompton at such a moment, the only man, perhaps, in all England who could have helped us, and that too, at just the right moment?" asked Fanny, with her eyes bent tenderly upon him by her side.

"I know not, Fanny; I scarcely comprehend this business at all. It seems like a miracle to me, and as though I had been impelled to do what I have done, by some superior power."

"Sir Robert Brompton has been here this morning talking with my father."

"Has he?"

"Yes, and has placed in his hands a great sum of money," said Fanny, with suppressed pleasure.

"For what purpose, Fanny?"

"He said it was for our start in life," said the blushing girl, as her eyes sought the ground.

Sir Robert, in his generosity, had indeed thus pecuniarily befriended the young couple, and by bestowing that which to him was a trifle, he richly endowed persons of such humble requirements as those who would appropriate this hundred pounds. The pleasure of giving was rich recompense to him.

After having settled the affairs of Fanny and her lover, so far as to leave them with the most happy prospects in view, Sir Robert resolved to call personally upon Sir Charles Marlow, partly to explain to him the part that he had performed in this peculiar business, and also to refer to Mrs. Marlow and to take from Sir Charles a written discharge as to his right to her hand. This Sir Robert determined to do, not with any distinct object in view, but rather as an act of justice to one who had served him so long and faithfully. In pursuance of this object, he called at Marlow House, and after due ceremony was ushered into the presence of its master, who received him courteously.

Sir Robert frankly explained the matters referred to, as he had designed to do—and told Sir Charles why and how he had been induced to befriend young Manley, and also referred to his connection with his housekeeper, and found Sir Charles so far from being vexed at these subjects, inclined to make all the reparation in his power, cheerfully acquiescing in signing a paper drawn up by Sir Robert, fully resigning all claims to Mrs. Marlow's hand, and also acknowledging the deceit he had practised. Sir Robert who had supposed him to be an austere, unprincipled man, was greatly surprised at this. Indeed he knew not what to make of such concession on his part, as was readily yielded to each proposition.

While Sir Robert Brompton was thus engaged with the baron, there appeared at the gates of Marlow House, a man whose looks bespoke him as belonging to the humbler classes. From the coarse garments that he wore, and his swarthy complexion, he might have been supposed to belong to some of the roving tribes of gipseys that infested the rural districts of England at this period. He moved like one intent upon observing everything about him, and seemed to be absorbed in his own thoughts. To his inquiry whether Sir Charles Marlow was at home, he received an affirmative answer, and immediately requested to be shown to his presence, as he wished to see him on some personal business.

The servant had intended to go up and announce the stranger. but by some mistake he followed the valet into the reception room, where he saw Sir Robert and Sir Charles together.

"Do I address Sir Charles Marlow?" asked the stranger, looking at the baron.

"That is my name, sir. Have you any business with me?" asked Sir Charles, somewhat sharply.

"I have, sir. Shall it be transacted here?" he said, looking towards Sir Robert, as though he desired to see the master of the house alone.

"Yes, and briefly."

The other seemed to hesitate for a moment, and to regard Sir Charles with great steadiness as though he would read his very soul before he spoke further, and then said:

"I may not have any claims upon you, sir, and yet I have presumed to ask a favor on account of my acquaintance and long service with your brother."

"My brother?"

"Yes."

"How can that be, since he has been these many years in India?"

"It was there that we served together, and on parting with him he had become somewhat reduced, and he borrowed from me a hundred pounds, and said that if I would show you this signet ring as a token from him, and the note, that you would, he thought for his sake, repay me. I happen to need the money very much at present, and have therefore been obliged to seek you, though I have just arrived in England."

Sir Charles glanced over the note and threw it carelessly upon the table by his side, but the ring he looked upon more closely.—His countenance seemed to show that a strong but silent contest was going on within his breast relative to that brother; he even seemed for a moment to forget that Sir Robert Brompton was there, or that the stranger was waiting, but at last he asked:

"Was my brother well when you left him?"

"Perfectly so, though the climate has not spared him; he's bronzed by exposure and roughened by service."

"There is the sum that the note repre-

sents," said Sir Charles, handing a few notes to the stranger.

"Thank you," said the other, taking the amount with evident satisfaction, though he thrust it into his pocket without counting the money.

"Did my brother send no word by you?" asked Sir Charles, with interest, still regarding the ring.

"Why, yes, he bade me remind you of the time when you were both boys together, and tell you that he often thought much and tenderly of home; he also bade me to recall to you the period when your mother died, and you both, then boys, followed her remains to the grave, and he wished me to say to you that there were but two of you now, and that it would be joyful to go down the hill of life in peace together."

"Did he tell you this?" asked Sir Charles, musing; "he did but speak the language of my own heart. There is no reason why we should be so widely separated from each other."

"Say you so?" asked the stranger; "would you really wish to embrace your brother? I thought from what he had told me on our long marches, that there was a want of sympathy between you."

"There has been, but I feel that I am changed now."

"And would be glad once more to embrace him?" he asked.

"Most happy. We have not been so intimate as two brothers should be, and now I feel that I need a brother's aid and counsel; but regrets are vain, it is perhaps too late for me to expect ever to see him again."

A visible change had come over the stranger within the last few moments, and a hasty movement served to divest him of the rough outward covering that he wore, leaving him standing there in the full dress uniform of a general of cavalry! A moment after and either repeated the name of the other.

"Francis!"

"Charles!"

The two brothers embraced each other in tears. Ay, the before hard-hearted elder brother wept now, and tears rolled over the sun-burnt cheek of the East Indian officer. Sir Robert Brompton looked on with no ordinary feelings of interest. The sight seemed to him to be almost a sacred one, and with the knowledge of Mrs. Marlow's story which he possessed, he fully appreciated the scene before him. He saw in a moment the reason why that brother had come to his early home in disguise, and he wished to know whether time and chance had softened his elder brother's heart, before he made himself known to him. And after they had spoken of those subjects which it seemed most natural for the first to refer to, Sir Robert waited impatiently for the officer to ask after her whom poverty had compelled him to leave behind, when he was a cornet just starting for India.

But there seemed to be no purpose of this sort in his mind. His brother having introduced the general to Sir Robert, he also said that at his leisure he would explain to him the business that had brought Sir Robert at that time to his house, but that at present they must be happy together. Sir Robert remarked casually that he believed he was well acquainted with one whom he had once held very dear.

"Whom do you refer to?" asked General Marlow, quite innocently.

"Mrs. Marlow," he replied.

"Mrs. Marlow?"

"Or perhaps I should say, Emma Warden, to be more plain."

"Emma Warden; did you know her, sir?" asked the soldier, seriously.

"Did I know her, yes, and still know her, well," replied Sir Robert.

"There is some strange mistake here," said the officer, "Emma Warden died many years since, almost as soon as I left England. I have my brother's letter to that effect."

"A falsehood, brother," replied Sir Charles. "A deceit only worthy of one as guilty as I then was. Emma Warden still lives, and has ever been true to you."

"Why, this is very strange. And where is she now, pray?" he asked, earnestly.

"With Sir Robert Brompton."

"She has had the direction of my family for years, and is still at its head."

The officer mused to himself, while Sir Robert felt relieved to know that he had not remained so long away from her without even writing to her, while he believed her to be alive and still in England.

THE MISTAKE OF A LIFE-TIME.

CHAPTER LII.—[CONTINUED.]

Some moments of silence transpired, in which the soldier seemed hardly able to realize the fact that Emma Warden and himself had been separated for so many years, when but for the deception that had been practised upon him they might have been enjoying life in the sunshine of each other's smiles. He seemed more visibly moved than he yet had been, and Sir Robert appeared to fear for the result between the two brothers.

"O, brother, brother!" said the officer, at last—"this is the severest reflection of all. That Emma, for whom I would have given up everything, that I might call her my wife, should have been living all this time, while I have been wasting my life in the wilds of India."

"Ah, Francis, you can add no words that will heighten my consciousness of my own guilt."

"Nay, I would not reproach you at such a moment as this, but the heart will speak out, brother."

"When I wrote you that she was dead, I had designed to supersede you in her affections; but having failed in that, I was more than once tempted to refute the story that I had fabricated; but until within these few days past, I have never possessed such a spirit as would have led me to consummate so just a determination."

"Let bygones be bygones," suggested Sir Robert Brompton; "I can judge as one unprejudiced between you; I see not only the honest confession on the one hand, but the heart to forgive on the other, and a smiling Providence over all."

The soldier gave his hand to Sir Robert with a grateful smile, and said, cheerfully:

"You say well, my dear sir; the past is beyond recall, and it only remains for us to improve our experience, not to regret that which is already over, and past help."

"There's my hand, brother," he continued, offering this token to Sir Charles. "In the future, let come what may, we will be to each other brothers indeed, and thus obliterate the records of the past."

"With all my heart, Francis—it will be my constant endeavor to atone for the wrong I have done you."

As the soldier took Sir Robert Brompton's arm, and invited him to a short walk in the park, his brother knew very well that it was to inquire after her to whom his heart was still affianced.

And so it was. Sir Robert answered all his curious inquiries, and gave him a full history of her who had formed so important a member in his household for a period of years. His informant was eloquent in describing the

good qualities of Mrs. Marlow; her kindness of heart, her lady-like delicacy of character, her subdued and quiet dignity of manner, and in short, he drew such a truthful yet pleasing picture of the soldier's early love, that he was overjoyed at the news he heard.

"And she is now, you say, at Haredale?" continued General Marlow, musing to himself, and picturing her image in his mind.

"Yes, at a cottage where I occasionally repair with my family," replied Sir Robert, observing him with interest.

"Are they also there now?" asked the soldier, somewhat inquisitively.

"Only an adopted daughter and Mrs. Marlow," replied Sir Robert, smiling within himself at the soldier's query.

"How odd it sounds to me to hear you call her by that name—it seems so misplaced," he said.

"True, I should think it would. It appears that she retained the name on account of her father's scruples.

"Yes, yes—the old gentleman was over-conscientious—I can understand it. But he was a fine man, Sir Robert, for all that."

In the mood that was actuating General Marlow, any one he could have referred to would have been spoken of as a fine person; the truth was, he saw everything with new eyes, and his heart leaped as fresh as in boyhood, at the joyful anticipation of once more meeting her who to him was still Emma Warden, the curate's daughter.

Chatting cheerfully together, Sir Robert and General Marlow repaired once more, after the walk, to the house, where they were both kindly welcomed by its master.

It was a strange party that was gathered in the drawing-room of Marlow House that night. Indeed a change seemed to come over everything with the singular vicissitude that had awakened the elder brother to a sense of manhood and feeling. Francis looked at him with surprise, to see him so different from that which he had seemed when they had parted from each other last.

He was no longer the hard-hearted elder brother, arrogating to himself, the entire benefit of their father's estate, but he was a brother indeed, in heart and in action. The soldier could but sigh to think they had not better known each other before, but present joy left little inclination in his breast for regrets.

Sir Charles himself told his brother of his stratagem to win Emma's hand, and of her resolute conduct, and subsequent escape from him. He acknowledged his perfidy, and declared that he now held himself in such contempt for the exercise of the spirit that had prompted him in the past, that he could never hold up his head with a manly confidence again. But he was freely forgiven, and affectionately entertained by his brother and Sir Robert, who cheered him on in the good resolve that he had made for the future, to atone, as far as was in his power, for the past. Francis could not have returned at a more opportune moment, either for himself or for his brother, and both himself and Sir Charles realized this fully.

Leaving the brothers to enjoy each other's society, and Francis to repress his impatience until he might see her who was still so dear to him, we must turn to other characters of our story.

CHAPTER LIII.

A GLANCE AT THE PAST.

Well—peace to thy heart, though another's it be ;
And health to thy cheek, though it bloom not for me. MOORE.

TIME has not halted one moment, while we leave one circle of our characters to represent another; its unceasing course is steadily onward—they all advance alike towards death, that starting post for heaven.

Clara was still moving on in the quiet, unostentatious life that seemed so congenial to her feelings; the birds and flowers were still her constant pets, and the grove, and the solemnly suggestive graveyard behind the village church, her daily resort for contemplation and thought. When she was alone, her life had become a waking day dream, and all things were contemplated through a gauze-like ideal veil of soft melancholy. Mrs. Marlow would often strive to dispel the mood that seemed to render Clara so insensible to the outward world, but she rarely succeeded in interesting her beyond the teeming beauties of the harvest scenes that surrounded them at this season of the year.

"Clara, did you see the reapers to-day, as they gathered in the nodding field of ripened grain?"

"I watched them until the twilight hour drove them home with sheaf and sickle," was the reply.

"It was a fair sight, a generous sight, and I watched it too; I think gratefully of the bounties of a good Providence."

"It reminded me," said Clara, "of the harvest of life, and I wondered how many souls were fully ripened, that the reaper Death cuts down and gathers into sheaves, garnering them for eternity."

"You do give such a serious cast to everything, Clara, that it makes me feel sad to hear you converse."

"Do I?" said Clara, thoughtfully; "well, I know I am growing to be poor company for any one save my own thoughts, and sometimes these are sad enough, and render me quite unhappy."

"Sir Robert is coming back to-morrow," replied Mrs. Marlow, "and you will be cheered by his presence, Clara."

"It was a singular combination of circumstances that took him away to follow Edward Manley to Marlow House; how very odd that chance should have brought the young man here to seek for employment—was it not?"

"Most truly, it was very strange; but Providence sometimes chooses singular ways to effect its objects. You said that it was a strange

chance, Clara, that brought him here, but in my mind, it was as much ordained that this should take place precisely as it did, as it was fore-ordained that you and I should live as we do here."

"You believe, then, Mrs. Marlow, that everything is fore-ordained by Heaven?"

"I do, most assuredly, and all my experience sustains the belief."

Clara sat lost, as it were, in meditation, and Mrs. Marlow watched the working of her expressive countenance with more than usual interest for some moments, and then she asked:

"What are you so absorbed in thinking about, Clara?" The tone was gentle and confiding.

"I was thinking that I wished I could know the future, if it be fore-ordained and prepared already. I think I could then be happy—that I should be content."

"What would you know, Clara, more than you know already?" asked the good Mrs. Marlow.

"I would know, my dear Mrs. Marlow, whether it shall ever be discovered to me who my parents were?"

"Ah, Clara, it matters but little after all, so that we do our duty to each other, and are content."

"Perhaps not, or rather it may seem thus to you, who know not the want of this important knowledge."

In the meantime, Earnest Brandon, the young, enthusiastic, and perhaps a little romantic curate of Haredale, came constantly to the cottage. There seemed to be a mutual understanding between him and Clara—for once more they enjoyed each other's society in quiet and reflective walks together, in reading beneath the broad old elm that ornamented and shaded the front of their rural abode, as well as in conversing upon the subject which had within six months or a year past become so interwoven with her feelings, and so impregnated all her views of life. We mean the Christian religion, as Mr. Brandon had taught it to her.

To observant persons who saw and noted their intimacy, it appeared that they loved each other most tenderly, though there was no evidence of this, other than his constancy; there were no other tokens, no familiarity, no particular expressions—and yet it was very true that the attraction of Clara's society had so powerfully charmed the curate, that he felt he had not the power to resist the temptation, and determined to indulge it, but with guarded tongue, and careful manner, lest he might again commit himself. He did not entertain a single hope of ever calling her his wife, for Clara had once told him so earnestly and truthfully that this could never be, that he felt she must have reasons past his control; but he could not deny himself the sweet enjoyment of her captivating society.

Not permitted to speak upon the one subject that so warmly actuated his breast, yet the curate would fancy as they commented upon these absorbing themes that had become Clara's life, and which drew forth all those tender intonations of voice which the heart can so easily furnish when it is awakened by feeling, he would fancy, we say, that those tender and heart-awakening tones were uttered thus in soft and winning melody for his ear, and that a stranger could not have drunk of such sounds from her lips. And when he reached his quiet little home, and sat himself down in his little library, he would sit for hours and recall every word and every look that had passed—recall the tender expressions of feeling lavished by Clara upon the holy subject upon which they had been conversing, and appropriate half of them to such a cause as his heart suggested.

Mrs. Marlow thought that Clara must have reconsidered her refusal of Earnest Brandon,—for she had by some means discovered that she had once declined the offer of the curate's heart and hand,—they seemed to be again so very intimate; but let the curate and Mrs. Marlow think what they will, Clara never entertained the least thought of this matter: she considered it settled forever. But Earnest Brandon was deceiving himself, or rather laying a snare for his own heart, in the way we have already seen.

It was a fine autumn afternoon, the twilight hour had already begun to spread its sombre veil over the landscape, when a party dashed up to the entrance of the cottage, and dismounted. It was Edith and Lord Amidown, Lady Josephine and Walter. As they approached, the curate was sitting by Clara's side in the entrance, and now for the first

time, met Lord Amidown and his sister at Haredale. Lady Josephine approached him at once, and offering her hand, greeted him as an old friend, while Edith and Walter had already known him here. He was pressed to join the party at the tea-table, where Lady Josephine seating herself by his side, engaged him in a conversation too low to be overheard by the rest of the party, but which was exceedingly interesting to her, and which seemed to affect the curate not a little.

That the reader may the better understand the character of Lady Josephine, the curate and the scene we are describing, it will be necessary to go back for a period of years, and represent them both in different connections from those they now fill.

A fair personification of modest worth and rural beauty was Lydia Gray. Born of humble but worthy parents, who like their ancestors for many generations before them were dependants to the proud estate of the Earl of Amidown, beneath whose castle walls the cottage home and grounds were located. Had not Lydia possessed a naturally strong and well balanced mind, she would have been spoiled while yet a child, for her remarkable beauty of person had made her an early pet at the castle, where the rich heiress to this broad domain, the lady Josephine, was but too much delighted to find a companion of her own age and sex to love, and with whom to roam about the woods and glens that hem in the lands of the estate, and render it one of the fairest rural districts in all of "Merrie England."

To this preference Lydia was indebted for the liberal instruction which had so improved and cultivated her natural taste, and rendered her, mentally, at least, her noble patron's equal. The castle was her constant abode, and the youthful Lady Josephine would scarcely permit her to be out of her sight. This favoritism was also of no little value to Martin Gray, her father, who never failed to have his rent remitted in full at the close of every half year. Besides this liberality, the steward of the castle was in the practice of sending some substantial token each returning Christmas of his lord's good will to the honest farmer and father of his daughter's protegeé, the pretty little Lydia, whose flaxen curls and dimpled cheeks had won the hearts of the entire household.

The same instructers and private tutors who were engaged for the high-born child of fortune, also bestowed their attentions in common upon the humble but no less beautiful child of Martin Gray. Her clothes were from the same wardrobe, her toys and books from the same source, and in short had Lydia been a sister to Josephine she could have shared no more fully the kind consideration and munificent providence of the stately and proud Earl. The father of Josephine was a man of profound study and erudition, most observant of the tender flower which Heaven had sent him to rear and cherish, and who, with a brother of about her own age, must be his representatives, and that of his lordly line of ancestors in the future, for with him now rested alone the name of Amidown. His wife had died when Josephine was about fifteen, and the earl was not a man to love or to marry twice.

In little Lydia he had discovered the germs of a sweet temper, a generous and yielding disposition, and those traits of mildness that in after years form the crowning beauty of her sex. To secure such an example and influence in his daughter's behalf, was the actuating motive of her father in rearing and fostering Lydia thus gently, and in striving to render her in all respects a desirable associate for his own child. Money and influence the earl knew very well, would easily procure polished and courtly companions for his daughter, but money could not create nor purchase the traits which had so challenged his admiration in the farmer's child.

Time in its steady unwavering course brought with it approaching maturity, and the two friends, after years of sweet companionship, were now just blooming into womanhood, and the attendant charms that wait upon the flower in its ripened fragrance and perfection. There is no period when the gentle sex appear more lovely or more interesting, than at this age; when the heart, peculiarly susceptible, is filled with the ideal, and in its fullness of joy is ready to lavish its wealth of love and devotion upon another; when all life's phases are seen through the soft twilight hue of romance. The simplest token of regard is then cherished as of inestimable value, the most ordinary events are clothed with tender thoughts and comparisons, every association is

truthful, or believed to be so, and the bright star of hope is the only magnet that attracts the soul.

Disappointment has not yet clouded, nor care corroded the heart; the cold, selfish breath of the world has not yet mildewed the fair and stainless purity of that brow; no tears, save those of gentle sympathy, have dimmed the brightness of those volumed eyes; the bitter realities of life are all yet to come. Josephine and Lydia had as yet tasted nothing of their bitterness.

Residing as they did in a somewhat isolated district, the two saw few individuals beyond the circle of the household, and their instructers. True, they mingled at times in the village sports on May day, and other occasions of rural gatherings, but the profound respect that custom demanded of the humbler classes towards such as the earl's daughter, generally acted as a source of restraint upon such minglings, and both the lady and the villagers realized that they enjoyed themselves better in their legitimate spheres. It is true that Josephine's free heart would sometimes rebel, and her native spirit sigh for the freedom and enjoyment that the humble peasantry participated in with such zest, but in the wearing of her title and position she must pay the attendant penalty.

Yet there was one person who was an acknowledged friend of Lydia's, and on whom Josephine herself often smiled, a youth of the valley, named Earnest Brandon, whose father, though like Martin Gray a dependant of the estate of Amidown, was still a thrifty man, and whose good fortune and industry had enabled him to amass what to one with his humble desires and actual wants was a comfortable fortune. Earnest's father had thus been enabled to afford him advantages for cultivation and personal improvement, not generally enjoyed by those of his class of society at that period. From early childhood, Earnest had associated with Lydia Gray, and the signal advancement that he saw her make under the patronage of the earl and his daughter, incited him to more than ordinary exertion. He loved Lydia in secret, but her proud associations at the castle rendered him perhaps timid and doubtful, as to his success with her—though she was ever kind and considerate to him. But he reasoned, that with her sweet, conceding disposition, she would be thus to any other, and indeed he had never received from her any peculiar mark of regard or affection.

It is doubtful if any power of ordinary ambition could have made Earnest Brandon so constant a student, such "a consumer of midnight oil," save the desire to equal Lydia in mental attainments, and to feel more and more worthy of the love he secretly coveted. As it was, his leisure moments were preciously husbanded, and a good book was always ready to his hand. Many and many a time had he walked three leagues to the nearest market town, where he could procure such books as he wanted, and he performed the journey at night to save time and expense, in order that he might afford himself the mental luxury he desired.

The indulgence and cultivation of such a taste was not without its physical as well as mental effect upon Earnest. The fine manly expression of his brow was heightened in its beauty by a beaming spirit of intelligence, while his conversation made his society coveted by all, and even highly entertaining and agreeable to Lydia and Josephine, when he was fortunate enough to meet them in a situation where they could mingle in social intercourse. And thus years were recorded in the ledger of time, until Josephine and Lydia were eighteen years of age, and Earnest Brandon was twenty.

The earl now resolved to take his daughter to his town residence in London, deeming her of sufficient age to begin to see and partially to mingle with that society which in time he hoped she would grace, and in which she must eventually take the position that her rank and fortune commanded. Josephine had been to London for a short period at a time before, but now that she was to take up her residence there, she felt no little regret at bidding farewell to the scenes of quiet, peaceful happiness that were entwined with the memory of her childhood's home. All innocent and untainted by the pride and allurements of the world, these feelings had strong influence upon Josephine, and she shed tears of genuine sorrow at parting from her rural home. The earl saw that his daughter was unhappy, and determined that Lydia should accompany her to town, as he thought by this means partially

to reconcile her to an event that at first so seriously dashed her spirits.

Both Lydia and Josephine were delighted at the prospect of remaining still together, and in a fortnight they were domesticated in the town house of the Earl of Amidown.

Through the kindness of the earl and Josephine, Lydia was introduced to their domestic circle on an equal footing with her noble friend and companion; but as Josephine was deemed yet too young to go largely into society, her circle was still limited. Yet she began to mingle with the world sufficiently to feel its influence, and even became gradually much devoted to dress and fashion. The town had charms for her that Lydia could not appreciate, but still the proud girl loved her humble friend none the less, though day by day the impressions of her rural home were less and less potently felt. It was not so with Lydia; her gentle nature was better fitted to the soft scenery and music of nature, a bubbling brook across a forest path, or winding like a thread of silver through a verdant meadow, had inexpressible charms for her.—And not unfrequently her spirit fluttered in her breast, like a caged bird longing for the freedom and invigorating air of the merry greenwood.

Finding at last how uncongenial with her taste these town associations were, Josephine reluctantly consented to Lydia's returning to her friends in the country. But the fair young girl had made more than one gay city acquaintance who was smitten by her simple attractions. She had heeded but lightly the fashionable compliments of these persons, and weighed them in a scale of calm, but deep penetration, that showed her very truly how shallow they were at heart. And yet, strange to say, as careful as she thought herself, and as much on her guard as she ever was, the person whose attention was most agreeable to her, was the one who of all the company at the earl's hospitable mansion was the least worthy of her confidence. Lydia did not strongly affect him, but was rather won by his extraordinary conversational powers than by any other peculiarity relating to his person or mind. He was a young officer in the king's guard, one who had strong natural advantages, and to these he added a large experience in travel and reading. Col. Dudley might have been in years nearly thirty, but he was of a fine figure, handsome and graceful—just the person to fill a lady's eye. Lydia could not but be pleased with the polite and delicate attention of such a man, and she had enjoyed many pleasant hours with him at the earl's before it was announced that she would return again to the country. When she did go, the manner in which Col. Dudley bid her good-by impressed her somewhat by its earnestness.

Scarcely had Lydia greeted her friends at home, and met with Earnest Brandon, who was as cordial as he dared to be in expressing his pleasure at again meeting her, when Col. Dudley appeared in the neighborhood, declaring that a sudden order upon business connected with his official position had brought him into the neighborhood, and being so near, he could not permit himself to leave without a call upon her at her home.

His stay proved so protracted that Earnest Brandon began to feel a certain uneasiness, and after a while discovered that the heart which would else have been his, was already more than half won by the gallant Colonel Dudley of the king's guard. And so it really was; Lydia was dazzled by his conversational powers, and he had at last won her entire confidence. By what means, or through what promises, no one knew. At last he left her for the city, but he came not back again.

One month after that period Lydia was found drowned in the deep brook that intersected the forest path near her father's cottage. The story needed no interpreter!

Earnest Brandon had loved her, but there had never been a reciprocity of feeling between them; that is to say, no near intimacy had ever been cultivated between him and Lydia, but he felt the blow to his peace of mind keenly, and this very incident it was that gave to his character the melancholy turn that we have already alluded to, and it was also this early blight upon his hopes that had led him to embrace the profession that now occupied him. In Clara he found one who had not only more beauty, more strength of character, and a more lovely perfection in all respects, but also one who sympathized sincerely with him in the devout and religious sentiments that occupied so large a space in his thoughts.

CHAPTER LIV.

MEETING OF OLD FRIENDS.

Absence, with all its pains,
Is by this charming moment wiped away. THOMSON.

We have related a scrap from the history of Earnest Brandon, the curate of Haredale, and he who was now so devotedly attached to Clara, in part because it served in some degree to inform the reader of the early life of Lady Josephine, as well as of one who had become so much of a confidant with Clara. Lady Josephine knew of the feelings entertained by the curate for Lydia when they were playmates and companions together, and she knew too of the tragical result of Colonel Dudley's intimacy, and for which, by her father's influence, he was disgraced, and dismissed from the service.

Clara and Edith wandered again over these scenes, rendered so interesting by the many thoughtful hours that Clara had passed there; each opened her heart most fully to the other, and their sympathy was freely mingled. Edith had so much to tell her dear friend of her proposed marriage which was soon to take place, of her arrangements, and happy prospects, that they found hardly any time for gloomy reflections; they were a happy party, all four of these who had just come down from the city.

The harvest twilight lay in picturesque beauty about the cottage, and so soft and genial was the hour that the whole party had seated themselves about the lawn in the immediate vicinity of the entrance where the ladies were chatting together, including Mrs. Marlow and Clara, the former sewing on a light piece of embroidery. While the party were thus engaged, their ears were saluted by the approach of a travelling chaise, which stopped opposite the entrance of the lawn, before the cottage.

The first person who stepped out of the vehicle was a little above the medium size, a man past the prime of life, who walked a little lame as he approached. This was Sir Robert Brompton. His companion was a taller person than himself, of a fine manly figure, and handsome, sun-burnt countenance. He was dressed in the national undress uniform, and walked forward with a quick, nervous step, as he came to the side of Sir Robert.

"Who are these?" asked Lord Amidown, turning to Walter.

"One is Sir Robert, I know," exclaimed Edith, rushing forward and giving him a sincere and hearty kiss.

"It is Sir Robert," said Walter, as he and Lord Amidown came and cordially pressed his hand at meeting.

Clara had discovered that it was he even before any of the rest, but she came forward the last one to greet him, and did not kiss him until after he had pressed his own lip to her cheek, and spoken kindly to her.

Sir Robert spoke to Mrs. Marlow also, but she either heard him not, or was too much absorbed to answer. As she gazed upon the commanding figure and deportment of the gentleman by his side, her work dropped from her hands, and she looked upon the soldier with eyes that bespoke the utmost intensity of feeling. He seemed to be struggling with Sir Robert, who held him back by the arm, as though he wished to see if Mrs. Marlow would know him.

"Francis!" she almost whispered, "*is* it Francis, or am I again deceived? I pray you speak to me, sir."

"It is General Francis Marlow," said Sir Robert. "You need feel no fear of deception this time, I assure you."

"Yes, Emma, it is indeed Francis," he said, taking her hand tenderly, and leading her away toward the grove.

"There go two happy beings," said Sir Robert, rubbing his hands with perfect delight at the sight he beheld.

Sir Robert had not waited to introduce General Marlow to any one. That he deemed to be of no importance at such a moment, but now that the two had left them, half a hundred questions poured in upon him at once from Lord Amidown, Walter, Edith, and even Clara, to know if that was indeed Francis Marlow, and the early lover of the dear good housekeeper. To these inquiries, Sir Robert replied in detail, telling them how the discovery of his arrival had just been made at his brother's, and how his brother had changed and become a liberal and noble-hearted man, as it were, all at once, dividing his entire estates with him whom he had so seriously injured years before. He told them also of his successful arrangements relating to young Edward Manley and the gentle village girl whom he loved. In short, Sir Robert came to them so laden with good tidings and interesting news, that they very nearly wearied him out with questions and congratulations.

"Is Fanny Hardway pretty?" asked Lady Josephine.

"What did she say when she found that all was so happily settled?" asked Edith, with speaking eyes.

"Did not her mother and father press her to their hearts after all this?" asked Clara, in her turn.

Sir Robert, as happy as any of them, answered all in a breath, and told them of the poor, half-witted boy who was so happy after the marriage was stopped, and so miserable before it, and how the village gossips had resolved to take a holiday for the especial purpose of discussing and catechising about the whole transaction, and how happy in the meantime Fanny and Edward were.

It is needless for us to particularize as it regards the interview between General Marlow and his long lost and early love. Suffice it that everything was fully explained, and a glance at each other's lives given since they parted. While he had grown to the full prime of manhood, she had hardly yet lost one charm of her more maidenly years. Her full, clear black eyes lacked not the power that love imparts, and General Marlow looked upon her with feelings like those that actuated his heart when years ago, he had kissed her fair young cheek, and sworn eternal fidelity; and he had been faithful to her. His early disappointment had given him a distaste for society, and devoted to his profession, he had struggled on with hardships of all sorts and characters in discharge of his duty.

"But can you love me now as well as then?" she asked, in answer to his earnestly declared regard.

"Ay, better, Emma, better. We both know more of the world, and of ourselves now, and our hearts will yield, when need be, more pliantly to the dictates of the head. Love you as well? I have never ceased to love you. This little talisman has been about my neck in every battle, and by every camp fire, on the open plain, and in the mountain, fighting with human beings, and with the wild and fearful beasts of the Eastern jungles. It has never left me, Emma."

As he spoke he took from his bosom a miniature that was suspended about his neck by a small golden chain. It was Emma's token when they had confidently hoped to

consummate this love for each other by marriage. This token of fond regard flooded her cheeks with tears, and she felt that she was indeed dear to him who had been thus faithful.

Before they left the grove, they became a second time betrothed to each other, and as Mrs. Marlow approached the pleasant group on the stoop of the cottage, her expressive countenance told them how happy she was, and that the gallant soldier by her side was the same at heart as the young cornet had been years ago.

Now it was time for Sir Robert to introduce the new comer in a formal manner, though little formality was observed among such a cheerful, happy party just from town, come down into the country to enjoy themselves, and be merry. The only draw-back to the fullness of their pleasure was the fact that Clara could not join them with her old accustomed spirits, but she placed them all at ease concerning her by her pleasant and ever cheerful mien. She could not help feeling overjoyed at the delightful re-union that she had just witnessed between her dear friend Mrs. Marlow and the general. This was enough in itself to temporarily dispel the gloom from her beautiful and delicate features, and Sir Robert and Edith whispered together as they observed the new animation there, that the dear girl was getting better.

"God grant that it may be so, Edith," said Sir Robert, earnestly, "for those blue veins are sometimes fearfully distinct upon her temples and brow, and now I am about to lose you from my side, I feel doubly drawn towards poor Clara."

Edith put her arm gently about his neck, and kissed him as he said this, for she saw a lingering tear in his eye.

"Have you had an opportunity to speak with Clara in private since your arrival?" asked Sir Robert, still observing her of whom he spoke, marking her placid smile and the oftentimes quick motion of her bosom, as a pang seemed to cross her heart.

"Scarcely, though we have been some together," she replied.

"And do you think her any less melancholy than when she first came down to Haredale?" he continued.

"No, I do not think her much changed; she has more time for thought, and less excitement here, and is doubtless more truthful in her appearance than when she was in town, where she strove to throw a cloak of mirth over her feelings."

"This is just as I have supposed," continued Sir Robert, "and you seem to understand her like myself, Edith."

At this moment the subject of their remarks approached them, and coming to Sir Robert's side, braided a sprig of flowing myrtle through the button holes of his coat, and made a wreath of the same for Edith's hair.

"Which of these girls do you love best?" asked General Marlow, who had been watching the pure regard that Sir Robert's face expressed for Clara, "your own daughter or the adopted one, eh, Sir Robert?"

"It is hard to say," replied Sir Robert, starting at the question, from a reverie that had absorbed him for a moment. "If you knew their story, you would not perhaps wonder at the feelings I possess."

"Lady Josephine has been telling me part of it—just enough to render me very curious to know all the particulars. This Clara is a sweet creature, though Edith is the handsomer, I should say. There, observe now, Sir Robert." As he spoke, Edith and Clara had entwined each an arm about the other's waist, and were turning away together for a short walk in the twilight.

"How very like they are!" said Sir Robert, watching them until, they had turned out of sight among the hedges.

Walter sat down with General Marlow, and together they talked over matters relating to Calcutta, Walter's native place, and the officer took much pleasure in describing to him the changes that had recently taken place, and also in listening to Walter's story of his own and Sir Robert's adventure together after they sailed from India. In the meantime Sir Robert and Lord Amidown were talking over some trifling matters relating to the proposed ceremony of marriage that was soon to take place between Edith and himself.

Suddenly a shrill cry as of horror came upon the evening air, and startled the party of gentlemen and Lady Josephine who were by the cottage door. Walter and Sir Robert were upon their feet in an instant, and in answer to Mrs. Marlow's suggestion, sprang at the top

of their speed towards the grove in the rear of the cottage. They soon came in sight of Edith, who stood with extended arms and pallid face on the brink of a broad and deep stream that intersected the grounds of the grove. Walter understood at once the state of affairs, dashed his coat from him as he ran leaping in a moment into the swiftly running stream. Sir Robert was less thoughtful as to himself, and only intent upon understanding the hurried exclamations of Edith, sprung from the bank into the water with every article of dress upon him as usual.

Clara had already sunk below the surface, and having satisfied himself as to the spot, Walter had twice dove down already, but had failed to reach her. Sir Robert was the same indomitable spirit that we have represented him to be heretofore. His physical strength was immense, and he was even more at home in the deep water with all his clothes on, than was Walter. At last Walter discovered her, but his own strength was nearly gone, and he rose to the surface to breathe, designating to Sir Robert where she lay. Taking Walter's directions in less than a minute, Sir Robert had brought the lifeless girl to the surface, and with a strong arm he swam to the shore where the rest of the party was ready with every assistance to help them up the steep bank, and to apply every restorative to Clara that experience suggested.

Walter had very nearly fallen a victim to his own anxiety to rescue Clara, for it required the united efforts of General Marlow and Lord Amidown to raise him from the water at the bank, he had become so exhausted. Not so Sir Robert; his strong arm had, while he was sustaining Clara, twice lent its ready aid to Walter, in helping him towards the shore; all having transpired so quickly that the others had hardly time to render them other aid.—Some wine from the house soon revived Walter, while Sir Robert bore the lifeless form of Clara in his arms to the cottage.

It was a long time before consciousness was restored to her; to those anxious ones about her, it seemed an age. At last, however, she breathed again with a deep sigh, and gradually the lungs assumed their function. This accident threw a gloom about the cottage, notwithstanding its fortunate termination, for some days; but it was not more than a week before all were once more reseated about the family board in peace and good health.

It appeared that as Edith and Clara were wandering on together after leaving the cottage, they approached quite nearly to the water's bank, which was rather precipitous, and Clara turning her eyes upon it, gazed for a moment, and as though she had become suddenly dizzy, lost her balance, or else her feet slipped, and she fell into the current. Of course it was some minutes before Walter and Sir Robert reached the spot, and during that time Clara had sunk three times, and when they got there she was lost entirely to sight; but all was well now,and she was safe.

"Did you not fear to die when you were thus sinking in the water, Clara?" asked Edith of her one day.

"No—I had no thoughts of fear. I remember to have thought of you, Sir Robert, and Mrs. Marlow."

"And was the situation painful?"

"On the contrary, it was almost pleasurable, and seemed like going to sleep. Perhaps, Edith, it would have been quite as well if I had *gone to sleep there!*" said Clara, with a deep meaning.

"O, say not so, remember how dear you are to us all, Clara, and strive to be happy," replied Edith.

A dark suspicion overspread Edith's mind as she thought upon the matter, that perhaps Clara had purposely cast herself from the bank at the time of her having so nearly lost her life; but she gave no utterance to such a thought, not even to Lord Amidown or Sir Robert, though she thought of the subject seriously.

But we must now leave Haredale and the family at Sir Robert's cottage for other scenes.

CHAPTER LV.

THE MONK OF GHERTSTEIN.

High minds, of native pride and force,
Most deeply feel thy pangs, *remorse:*
Fear for their scourge mean villains have;
Thou art the torturer of the brave. SCOTT.

WE must turn back once more to the day on which the jury had acquitted Karl Blasius of the charge that was brought against him, of attempting Hardhead's life, in the manner already described. The counsel through whose masterly arrangement and argument he had been enabled to obtain such a favorable verdict, did not stop here in his service to his client. He knew very well that the authorities would only allow him to pass out of the court house before they would arrest him on some other charge, inasmuch as he was proven to be a dangerous person to be at large, although so successfully cleared from the charge that had been brought against him.

The young lawyer therefore, immediately whispered to Karl that, though he was at liberty, he must not attempt to go out as he was, or he would be again arrested almost immediately. But lending him his own hat and cloak, he led him, in the confusion that ensued upon the adjournment of the court, through the private door of the hall, and making an appointment as to where they might meet that night, he sent the robber away in safety, leaving the bailiff and the police who had been on the watch for the prisoner, quite nonplussed as to how he had escaped them. Thus

"Liberty plucks justice by the nose."

Karl Blasius avoided all his former places of resort, fully realizing that he was sought by the police in every probable place, and that if he should be again arrested he would doubtless lose his liberty forever, if not his life. He called at Sir Robert's house, in order to repossess himself of the money he had placed in his hands for safe keeping, but finding Sir Robert out of the city, he addressed him at Haredale, at the very date of his return from Sir Charles Marlow's. Sir Robert immediately enclosed the proper order to transfer the deposit from the bankers where it had been left, also appointing a time and place where he would meet the robber immediately on his return to London.

But Karl Blasius found that London was getting to be a dangerous place for him. He dared not remain there one hour longer than was absolutely necessary in order to complete the transfer of his money, and this he transacted through his late legal counsel, paying the young lawyer just double the remunera-

tion that Sir Robert had promised him, viz., £2,000. He had money enough, and paid it willingly. This done, he improved the first opportunity to leave the metropolis, and turned his steps towards the scenes of his native valley. The robber was weary of excitement, —indeed he was almost weary of life; his late confinement had given him ample time for frequent and minute reviewals of his eventful life, and his conscience had most fearfully asserted its power.

He felt that it only remained for him now to seek the most quiet and secret abode, where, after dispensing the ill-gotten wealth that he possessed so that it might effect the best good, he could sit down by himself, and give up his hours to bitter, galling repentance. He felt that he had need enough of that.

For some reason, even after the close of his pecuniary arrangements with Sir Robert Brompton, the robber desired to see him, and yet he could not go down to Haredale—it would be a piece of foolhardiness for him to do so. He felt that he would be almost sure to be discovered and arrested, if he attempted it. In this mood, he resolved to commit his business to paper, and having done this, he sealed and carefully addressed it to Sir Robert, but still hesitated about trusting it in the mail. At last an idea seemed to strike him, and he determined to leave the document with his lawyer, with strict injunctions to deliver it to no one save Sir Robert himself.

"I have a letter," he said to the lawyer, having met him privately at his office, "which I wish to get safely to Sir Robert Brompton, and as he is out of town, I should like to have you engage to keep it for me, and deliver it in person when he shall come to London."

"Why not send it down to Haredale by the mail?"

"I fear some casualty or accident whereby it may get into the wrong hands or be lost."

"O, no fear of that: does it contain a draft for money that makes it so important?"

"No, not that."

"It is safe enough then, in any event, so you had better mail it for his country house."

"It will not answer my purpose to do so, and unless you will engage to keep it for him and deliver it in person when he comes to London, I must go down to Haredale myself."

"Well, if you are so decided and feel so very particular about it, I will do so."

"Thank you. I do, and now am much relieved, and can take my departure at once from London."

This seemed to close up the robber's business in the metropolis, and he walked away from the office of his counsel with a freer step than he had before done for months. A weight seemed to be off his mind, and all guilty as he was, he appeared to feel comparatively easy that his every step now would bring him nearer and nearer to the great object and purpose that he had already formed for repentance. As he passed on, it was evening, almost pitchy dark, and he pressed on to that part of the town where his humble lodgings now were, when, strange chance! he came full upon Hardhead. It was near a street lamp, and he knew him at once! His first impulse, almost a resistless one, was to strike him dead with the dagger that was already clasped in his hand. He even half drew it and followed the unconscious burglar for some steps. But suddenly stopping, he leaned against the stone wall of the house where he stood, and said to himself:

"Hold, I could kill him, but how will that agree with my new resolve? Quick, let me decide before he gets out of sight." And as the robber thus communed with himself, he seemed to be undetermined whether he should follow the receding form of the burglar, now just discernible through the darkness, or let him depart in peace. It was a struggle between his better judgment and his revengeful feelings against his former accomplice.

His better feelings and a resolve of a more godly life prevailed; and the burglar went on his way unharmed, while Karl Blasius turned and went towards his lodgings, with a downcast and more thoughtful face.

Now he came into St. James street, and saw the glare of light pour forth from the windows of the gaming house where he had so often played with fearful dishonesty of purpose, where he had so nearly ruined Lord Amidown and where that startling exposure had taken place, the secret of which he even then did not understand. He now crossed over the street into the shadow of an angle in the buildings opposite, where he paused for a few minutes, evidently recalling the moments of excite

ment that he had passed there, and with a sickening and scornful curl of his lip he passed on once more, still wrapped in the reflections that these subjects gave rise to in his mind. He saw how much evil he had done now, it came up before him with terrible force, and he almost groaned with the weight. His victims, like Banquo's ghost, came up before him at every point, and as Macbeth saw the spirits of those whom he had murdered pass in review on the surface of the magic mirror, so Karl Blasius now reviewed his victims.

Leaving the robber to his reflections, let us pass over a period of months and take the reader to another land.

It was but a few months subsequent to the scene which we have described, when an humble traveller stopped at the little ancient inn of Morentz. He was way-worn and weary, and had evidently come a long way on foot. His habiliments were coarse and his form not a little bent, while the expression of his countenance seemed to show its possessor to have tasted deeply of the bitterest cup of fortune. He looked about him with an eye that at times was lit up with vivid interest, and then as though the scene had little joy for him.

"Welcome," said the host, a little gray old man. "Wilt come in and refresh thyself, friend?"

"What is the name of thy inn?"

"It is called the Postilion."

"O, I remember."

"You remember it?"

"No, that is I saw the sign just now."

"Ah, will you walk in?"

"Thank you, good man, I have much need of rest and food, I will come in for a while."

After his partaking of a little plain bread, and drinking a glass of cheap wine, the host asked him from whence he came, and tried, as was his wont, to gain what news he could from the stranger by way of gossip.

"Do you go on to-night, or will you tarry until the morrow?" asked the host of the stranger.

"I must go on to-night. I suppose the roads are safe in this neighborhood—landlord?"

"O yes, of late years, there is rarely any trouble on the roads, but the bold Karl Blasius used years ago to keep the whole neighborhood for leagues about here even to the very gates of Brontz, in fear."

"He was beheaded, I suppose?" remarked the stranger, carelessly, while he seemed to examine the view presented from the door.

"No, he was condemned to be, but escaped by some curious means of his own construction. It is many years since that, but I believe he was drowned or shot while trying to get away."

"His band is now all dispersed, I suppose, of course?"

"O, yes, they had a cave not far from here in a deep wood, where the regular troops routed them and took a large number prisoners—among the rest, Karl himself, and carried them all to Armantz."

"A set of cutthroats that the country was glad to get rid of, I suppose?" said the stranger, indifferently.

"Not exactly so. The fact was, Karl Blasius used to be very good to the peasantry, who loved him."

"O, the peasantry then regretted, and spoke well of him," said the stranger, with evident interest depicted in his face.

"Yes, and it was the same with his father, the far-famed Schinderhames. Both have been in my time."

"Indeed, did you know him?" asked the stranger, watching the landlord with an earnest eye.

"Well, and might have known his son, but I was more closely watched by the authorities, and I stayed at home."

The traveller paid his moderate fee, pressed the host's hand with an humble benediction, and departed. Little did the landlord of the old inn think that he had just been talking with the very Karl Blasius, who, a score and more of years gone by, had been the virtual master of that part of the valley of the Rhine. The wanderer had gotten thus far on his return to that home which was, in fact, no home to him. Yet he had longed once more to look upon the old familiar spots where so many years of his early life had been passed, and where he had done so much good, and, alas! so much evil, the latter fearfully outweighing the former, if indeed it did not blot it out altogether.

The robber wandered on, and revisited those scenes so powerfully impressed upon his mem-

ory, recalling each event that had nemonized this or that spot upon his mind. He wandered even in the streets of Bronts, without any fear of discovery. He was so much changed, and such a lapse of years had transpired since he was there, that he felt not the least alarm. He visited the castle of Ghertstein again, where he had passed so many delightful hours, and where he had sought the hand of the fair Lady Gustine. All was a ruin now; the old lord was bankrupt, and Sir Robert had permitted it to go to decay without scarce a thought of the fact that it had been the home of his dearly loved wife, and her ancestors.

A few years of civil war and devastation had left the place a pile of ruins.

"Where her high steeples whilom used to stand,
On which the lordly falcon wont to tower,
There now is but a heap of lime and sand,
For the screech-owl to build her baleful bower."

Still actuated, even at this remote period, in no slight degree by his almost maddened passion for the Lady Gustine, the robber resolved that these ruins should be his future home, and that he would here live among the bats and owls, a creature no less out of the pale of human society than they were. The very hooting of the ghostly owls seemed in accordance with his feelings, and the darting and shot-like rustling of the bats' wings, was music to him now. These things were in accordance with the sad music of his own upbraiding conscience. Gentle sympathy from his own species would have been bitterness to him; the voice of kindness, gall itself. No, no, he was most at home here.

"The moss his bed, the cave his humble cell,
His food the fruits, his drinks the crystal well."

Ruins were too many, and hermits too frequent in the valley of the Rhine, for Karl Blasius, disguised as he was by the ruthless hand of time, to fear being disturbed or discovered. The ruins were somewhat disolated, forming the crowning point of a lofty and rocky promontory that jutted into the Rhine, and here he slept and prayed, for he was thoroughly awakened now to his crimes and the power of conscience. The dark man who had once kept that valley in awe by his deeds of daring, now knelt at the vesper hour, and smote his breast before high Heaven, a contrite, broken-hearted man. O, fearful close of a fearful career.

At last, when he had been many times seen, for this picture is not of a day, but of rolling years, those who came to know him casually, called him the Monk of Ghertstein, and some said that he either worked miracles or had the philosopher's stone, for he had done such noble deeds of charity, rescuing at times whole families from ruin, and casting peace broadcast about many an humble fireside, that he was deemed to possess more than human power. But he mingled not at all with society; sometimes in disguise he was said to visit the town, and learn where and how he could best do good, and it was not long after that, the deed was done, often so singularly as to leave it in doubt as to who had been the liberator of necessity. But the neighbors always on such occasions whispered the name of the Monk of Ghertstein!

CHAPTER LVI.

A LAPSE OF TEN YEARS.

O, Time! thou beautifier of the dead—
And owner of the ruin—comforter
And only healer when the heart hath bled—
Time! the corrector when our judgments err,
The test of truth, love,—sole philosopher! BYRON.

TEN years have passed since the period designated in the close of the last chapter.—How fraught with incident were they to the characters of our story, how full of development in the life-history of each and all of those to whom we have introduced the reader of these pages. On reviewing their history after such a lapse of time, we feel almost at a loss where to begin, there has transpired so much of joy and quiet peace in the various circles formed by each, there have occurred so many events that to them were fraught with so much of interest, and so important in their results, that we hardiy know where to resume the tangled thread.

The consummation of the kind-hearted Mrs. Marlow's happiness by the return of Francis, now General Marlow, seemed to act like a charm upon all the rest, for no sooner did the general declare that they should be united in the bonds of matrimony at the little church of Haredale, by Rev. Mr. Brandon, than Walter and Lord Amidown intimated that they should be most happy to follow suit, and before a month had elapsed after the marriage of Edward Manley and Fanny Hardway, the little church at Haredale witnessed the union of the three couples.

As time progressed, new faces came upon the scene, and joyous little children knelt by the mother's knee to repeat their nightly prayer, while the proud father listened and was happy.

Walter Manning and his wife, the Lady Josephine, still graced those aristocratic circles to which she was born, and both seemed best to enjoy this manner of life. Her taste, as we have seen, was formed like that of the gentle, but unhappy Lydia Gray; yet it seemed quickly to mould itself to city life after she had once tasted its dissipations and its engaging attractions, and now these scenes and minglings had become to her a second nature, their excitement was apparently necessary to her very being. Walter feeling the utmost confidence in her truth and honesty of purpose, felt no regret at her mingling thus with the gay world, and became himself in part a devotee of this style and fashion, until domestic ties in the form of lovely children, drew their hearts and attentions more within the home circle, where both became if possible happier than before.

Edith and Lord Amidown were different; both had seen enough of city life; besides Lord Amidown took the hue of his desires and

wishes from her he loved so dearly—as the chameleon takes its color from that which it rests upon—and her heart was so made for affection, her gentle spirit loved retirement so well, that she chose a happy country home, where both seemed blessed, and where,

"With secret course which no loud storms annoy,
Glides the smooth current of domestic joy."

A noble boy and gentle girl had been sent them by Providence to engage their hearts still more, and render happy their domestic hearth. Walter—named after him who had been a brother to its mother—was indeed a noble child, with all the elegance of manner and fine manly characteristics of his father, and the beauty of his mother, while little Clara—named after her whom Edith had loved so well, and with whom she had passed through so many trials—was such a dear, gentle, angelic flower, that Sir Robert seemed almost to worship her.

But unalloyed happiness is not the lot of mortals, and after twelve years of sweet companionship with her husband, a slow fever threw him into a decline, of which he died. The blow was less severe than it would have been had a sudden illness deprived Edith of her husband's society; but they were all prepared by the slow consumptive symptoms that, not unlike the gradual burning out of a lamp, at last having exhausted the vital tide, gently went out. And thus Lord Amidown quietly resigned his life, with a joyous hope to meet his loved and cherished ones again in heaven. Sweet solace for the dying!

Now completely bound up in her lovely children, who repaid her fond and jealous care with the tenderest affection, Edith was calm and even happy. It was now that Clara's philosophy, or rather religion, became so important a prop to Edith; they were much, almost constantly together, as of yore, and so earnestly did Clara labor for the happiness of her dear friend, that her widowed heart found such rich promise and hope as once more to be cheerful and content.

"Ah! dear, dear Clara, who could have foreseen this, that you to whom I once acted the Christian teacher's part, should now console me when my affliction seemed harder than I could bear?"

"It is only too much joy to think that I have been reserved for this good to you, Edith, for how much am I indebted to you for everything, even the dear kind friendship of Sir Robert himself."

"No, no, Clara, there you are wrong; it is for yourself alone that Sir Robert loves you, and he was from the very first drawn to you, not by any connection with me further than a mere introduction, but by the native and ever present goodness of your heart, and the kindness of your disposition. Nay, you need not shake your head thus incredulously, for he has himself often told me these very words that I repeat to you."

"Has he?" asked Clara, with interest, "ah, well, it is very, very pleasant to be loved, even by *strangers*."

"Strangers, Clara!"

"That is, I don't exactly mean that, but by those not attached to us by the ties of blood," she answered.

"No ties of blood ever could render you more dear to us than you are already, dear Clara," replied her friend, kissing her, and holding little Clara forward also to imprint a kiss upon the lips of its namesake.

"How sweet and innocent she looks, Edith," said Clara, regarding the child intently. "O, may God spare her the bitter experience of her whose name she bears."

"If heaven will but endow it with a *soul* as pure as thine, Clara, I shall be content, believe me. But like you, I have often prayed that she may never know the fearful experience even of her own mother."

"Dear aunt," for thus the child called her, "what makes you cry?" said the little girl, struggling to leave her mother and get into Clara's lap, and then laying her soft flaxen curls and her little throbbing temples in Clara's neck. The child loved her dearly, scarcely less than she did her mother, and so with Walter, whose lips quivered as he saw the tears on Clara's cheek, and with a struggle at a manly tone, he begged her to come and ride with him, as the horses had just been brought to the door.

"Go, Clara, go. The air is delightful this afternoon, and will revive you. Come, Walter and Clara shall both go with you, and drive over to Haredale, where you so like to go."

"Thank you," said Clara, sadly, and turning to the carriage with the children, she drove away towards Haredale.

This was Clara's position now; she seemed to have arrived only to the perfection and prime of her beauty, though a slight consumptive tendency that lingered about her constitution not unfrequently robbed her cheek in part of its bloom. She was still peerless in beauty, and no one who approached her, but was forced to acknowledge the power of her charms. In these twelve years past, more than one noble lord had laid his heart at her feet, but all were refused, though with a gentle delicacy and tact that only left them still more deeply her admirers than they had been before.

"Such around her shone
The nameless charms unmarked by her alone,
The light of love, the purity of grace,
The mind, the music breathing from her face,
The heart, whose softness harmonized the whole
And, O, that eye was in itself a soul!"

General and Mrs. Marlow were at Marlow House, in the sweet enjoyment of domestic happiness. Sir Charles had deceased these five years since, leaving all his broad domains to that younger brother who had gone to India through his unkindness an humble cadet, but who had returned crowned with honor, and as a general. No happier picture of pure domestic bliss could be drawn than that now reigning at Marlow House. The warmest and most delightful intimacy was kept up between Sir Robert and his family, and their early and happy associations were unforgotten.

"I understand, Emma," said General Marlow, "that Sir Robert and Clara are about to go to Italy. Her health of late has seemed to be failing, and the physicians prescribe milder air and sunnier skies."

"I am glad she is going," replied his wife. "I have long hoped that she would try, if only for the briefest period, a milder atmosphere.—Clara has grown pale and thinner, I have noticed of late."

"She is a very pure-hearted and noble girl," said General Marlow; "no wonder Sir Robert loves her so well."

"She is indeed pure-hearted—no one can testify to that more truthfully than I. From the first day that we removed to Haredale from Sir Robert's town residence, Clara made a study of pure and undefiled religion, and if any human being has a heart entirely baptized in holiness, it does seem to me that Clara is its possessor."

"You are an enthusiast, Emma, but I think you speak only the truth in this case," he answered.

"If you knew her as well as I do, you would not think me unduly prejudiced in her favor. I was with her almost constantly from the hour when she came to Sir Robert's, until we were married and came here, and have watched her progress as closely as though she had been my own child."

"I remember the singular story which you told me about her and Edith," he replied.—"It has seemed strange to me that she has never married; she might have allied herself to some of the finest men in London, persons rich not only in purse, but well endowed with intellect."

Mrs. Marlow made no answer, but bending over her little daughter, adjusted her flowing curls with busy fingers, while her thoughts were no less busily employed in another direction. It had not long puzzled Mrs. Marlow, with her affectionate assiduity and woman discernment, to read the very soul within Clara's breast, and her secret motives, though sacred, were all known to her.

"Did Clara often refer to her early life and associations?" asked the general, after regarding his wife in silence for a moment, during which a shade of the true feelings of Clara's breast crossed his mind, and which he seemed to read in the *silence* and manner of Mrs. Marlow.

"Only at times, to say that no doubt, as far as her present peace of mind was concerned, she would have been happier had she been left in the obscurity where Edith first met her."

"She was too sensitive to mingle with this coarse world," replied the general, "and should have rather been born to rank and station, or have remained in obscurity. Doubtless, the polishing of her native intellect by study and gentle associations, was the sacrificing of her peace of mind in this life."

"I have long realized that this is the truth in relation to her."

"How was that matter settled between her and Earnest Brandon?" asked her husband.

"O, time healed this second disappointment of the curate's."

"Second disappointment?"

"Yes, you remember the story I told you

about Lydia Gray, Lady Josephine's early companion, and who sacrificed her own life to her sense of honor?"

"Yes, I remember."

"Some four years I believe after we left Haredale, Mr. Brandon was at last married."

"You may well say at last," repeated her husband, laughing. "It was the third choice."

"That is nothing extraordinary; we have another instance in our immediate circle," she answered.

"Indeed; and who pray do you refer to?—Not Lord Amidown."

"No, but Walter."

"Was his a third choice?"

"Certainly. At first he was perfectly devoted to Edith, afterwards as much so to Clara, and finally fell desperately in love with Lady Josephine—actually the third choice."

"Did not Edith return his first regard," asked the general, not a little interested.

"Only as a sister, but she thought much of Walter for all that."

"And how was it with Clara?"

"*Clara loved him*, though she never acknowledged it to any human being. It was her first and last love, but Walter received her refusal, and not long after sought consolation, as I have said, with his present wife."

"Did not Walter realize that she loved him?"

"I think not; for his sake I could see that she assumed a manner and tone that were foreign to her heart. She was too conscientious to give him hope that she could never honestly encourage."

"Noble girl," said the general, thoughtfully. "And did Edith fully realize her friend's situation?"

"Hardly, for then her unhappy trouble with Lord Amidown had just occurred, and her own heart was bleeding too sorely to be strongly impressed with even Clara's grief."

"Yes, I remember now how complicated were the troubles of Sir Robert's household at that period."

"All seemed to come together, and all were very unhappy."

"Do you think Clara still loves Walter?" asked the general.

"No, I can hardly say that, because I consider that the train of thought in which she has so long indulged has gradually weaned her from all such affections, but yet when we first went down to Haredale I used to think that this love was still cherished in her breast, though I might have been mistaken."

"Poor child of fortune," said the sympathizing general.

Both paused, thoughtfully reviewing the checkered scenes of Clara's life, and the incidents that had connected them all together.—It was a singular train of thought, a complicated image of life.

Their little daughter had sunk down upon an ottoman, and now lay fast asleep, presenting a sweet picture of innocent beauty. Mrs. Marlow and her husband looked first upon the child, and then upon each other with an expression of most ineffable happiness beaming from their eyes. Could the lot of the kind-hearted and loving Mrs. Marlow be more at peace? Was she not very, very happy?

CHAPTER LVII.

THE DEPARTURE.

Let's not unman each other—part at once ;
All farewells should be sudden, when forever,
Else they make an eternity of moments,
And clog the last sad sands of life with tears. BYRON.

It was just twelve years from the period when Karl Blasius was confined in Newgate, as we have described, that two persons, a male and female, were executed in a like manner with the scene before referred to. These two persons were Hardhead and Mother Giles.—After the disappearance of Lancewood, as they called the robber, Hardhead and herself formed a copartnership for doing business together, and the tap-room became the scene of more sin and wickedness than ever before, until a bold and daring murder committed there was fairly traced to them, and for this, having been duly tried, they were hung together in Newgate.

The little Frenchman, whom they had called the Chevalier, took the tap-room and kept it from that time until his death, but it was never the riotous place that it had been under Mother Giles.

It was on that very day that Hardhead and the woman were executed, that Clara and Sir Robert Brompton started for the genial skies and balmy atmosphere of Italy. As time progressed they had been more and more thrown upon each other's society for amusement, and several times Clara had nursed by the sick bed of Sir Robert when he was suffering under protracted illness, much endearing herself to him by her self-sacrificing kindness and constant desire to serve him. Sir Robert's old desire would sometimes come over him, and he would wish at heart that he could know if he was beloved even by Clara for himself alone, and not from mere gratitude.

"Clara," said he, "you have been very affectionate to me, and since I have lost Edith, you have seemed to more than fill her place in my heart."

"Dear Sir Robert, I could not love an own father better than I love you," said she, truthfully, as she parted the locks, now frosted with gray, from his forehead.

She looked fondly upon him as she did so, and she remembered that thus had he done to her when they first met, and while he promised her future protection. How faithfully he had kept that promise? How much trouble she had been in reality to him, and yet how cheerfully he had humored her every whim? How liberally and how prince-like had he poured forth his wealth for her, and above all, how kind and affectionate had he ever seemed to her who had no right to his regard or care? Clara thought of all this as she parted Sir Robert's hair so gently from his forehead, and looked affectionately into his eyes.

We have more than once alluded to Clara's eyes, so peculiar and so beautiful. Sir Robert loved to gaze at them, they were so like

Edith's, and hers were so much like the strangely winning and fascinating ones of her mother, the Lady Gustine. A resemblance which had so singularly affected the robber in relation to them both, years before. Sir Robert could look into their deep, and slightly saddened depths, and fancy himself once more beside her whom he had so tenderly loved, yet so unreasonably suspected. Her memory had ever been fondly cherished by him, and was still revered most tenderly. He often told Clara of her surpassing beauty and excellence, her childlike vivacity and cheerfulness, until she seemed to know Sir Robert's wife almost as well as though she had indeed seen and been intimate with her. And then the enthusiasm with which Sir Robert described her, became contagious, and Clara loved to listen to, as well as her patron did to relate, the many and often repeated excellencies of the beautiful Lady Gustine.

"It was so unfortunate," said Sir Robert, perhaps for the thousandth time, "that we never had her portrait painted; but there was one of her in her father's possession, which, though I have often tried through others to find, since the castle was deserted, yet I never have yet heard from. Perhaps in our visit I may through my own exertions prove more successful."

"I hope so, Sir Robert; it would be such a source of satisfaction to you to possess it."

"I thought when we had yours and Edith's painted, that as she was about the same age when hers was taken as Edith was, that we should thus get a good picture of her, but I was disappointed; it did not call up my memory as I had expected it might do."

"Let us hope to find the original, Sir Robert, and that will be a prize for you indeed."

"Yes, I shall spare neither time nor labor to reclaim it, and it will be a satisfaction to have you see a faithful representation of one who has so often been the theme of our conversation. I can well remember how often it has challenged my admiration from its wonderful likeness to her, and how her fond father said when we left him for England, that he should keep it to have her loved features ever before him."

"I feel much curiosity to behold the picture of one so lovely in every respect as she must have been. I think I should love it almost as though it were human, after what you have told me."

Sir Robert smiled with inward pleasure at this remark, but made no answer to Clara.

Clara and Sir Robert, when they started for Italy, had left Edith contented and happy with her children at their country seat. The wound that her heart had received in the loss of Lord Amidown was nearly healed, that is to say, so far as the immediate grief was concerned, and she became so much absorbed in rearing and overseeing the education of her two children, that she had but little time for grief even had she been disposed to indulge in it. Indeed having become settled in life, and having also a large experience of its ills and crosses as well as its success and brighter spots, she was content and happy to fill what seemed to her to be her allotted sphere, while the sweet hope often recurred to her that in the end all would meet again in heaven.

The children whom she loved so dearly, inherited her own remarkable beauty, and though she could not be blind to the advantage of this, yet she watched with far more jealous pride and satisfaction their mental developments, which gave rich promise of a golden harvest.

"Dear Aunt Clara," said Walter, as he was bidding her and Sir Robert good by, "I could almost as well spare mama as you; indeed I love you very dearly."

Clara pressed her lips to the boy's forehead but could not speak, her heart was too full. "Every one seems so kind, so dear and so gentle to me, why," she thought to herself, "why does this sadness hang about my heart?" Kissing little Clara a dozen times and quieting the child's sobs at parting with her by ample promises of soon returning to see her again, the whole soon separated and Clara and Edith with a long embrace, bade each other farewell.

"I know not why I dread so much to have you leave us," said the latter, "some strange weight oppresses me while I think upon it, and I dreamed last night strange dreams, all about you."

"O, this is but fancy, dear Edith, the doctor is certain that I shall be better for the journey."

"God grant it may be so, Clara," answered her adopted sister, looking sadly into her pale face.

"But if I should never return, Edith," she whispered with an earnest but quiet mien, "I hope you will think kindly of me, and sometimes recall the happy hours we have passed together."

"Nay Clara, talk not thus, you make me feel wretchedly, you know how much I love you, you know how much reason I have to love you."

"Thank you, Edith, I believe you do love me. But I must not detain Sir Robert, he is already at the vehicle, and so now Edith, farewell,"

"One hurried kiss—one last, one long embrace—
One yearning look upon her tearful face"—

and the two friends had parted for the last time! They were destined to meet no more on earth.

Walter, mounting the Shetland pony that Sir Robert, his grandfather, had given him, rode with them on the way for a mile or more, and then bidding them once more good by, he turned back and at a hard gallop returned to the house, almost as sad at parting with Clara as he would have been at any untoward event that his young mind could have conceived of.

Sir Robert had directed their route so that it should carry them by the way of Marlow House, in order that they might see and bid the family there good by, for he realized the warm regard that existed between Clara and Mrs. Marlow, and she had herself expressed a wish to see her before she left England. With the kind Mrs. Marlow Clara reviewed their old associations, and talked over their long companionship, while she enjoyed the hospitality of Marlow House, and the cheerful, happy conversation of its master, the general. After a day's sojourn here, and after bidding them a warm and affectionate adieu, the vehicle that bore them dashed down the old lawn, and they were once more on their journey towards another clime.

Sir Robert was travelling in his own carriage, and his servant had selected from the stable for the first few stages, a pair of powerful bay horses, high-spirited, and which had been exercised but little for some days previous to this time, in anticipation of the somewhat protracted service that would be required of them. This being the case, the horses were full of life and spirit, and on leaving Marlow House, showed some signs of being a little unmanageable, but being promptly checked by the driver, they passed on obedient to the reins. As they came down into the village through which the way must carry them, the sight of a barking dog here, and boys playing at ball in another place, and the crack of a teamster's whip close by their very ears, again set them to prancing, and they became almost unmanageable even in the hands of their experienced and careful driver.

In this mood, they dashed through the village, and had reached its opposite outskirts, when a sudden spring of the animals and a jolt of the vehicle in an abrupt unevenness of the road, threw the driver violently from the box, and left Sir Robert and Clara in a most fearful and critical situation. A hasty or careless man would have leaped out, and perhaps have lost his life in consequence, but Sir Robert only pressed his arm about Clara's waist, to secure her as much as possible from the jolting, and danger of being thrown out, and also to reassure her; for although Clara spoke not a word, yet the paleness of death had overspread her features. Sir Robert set his teeth firmly, but made no movement. There was no possible manner in which he could better their situation, and he saw that it only remained for them to await their fate patiently, let it be what it might.

At this moment, with the horses at full speed, and the vehicle dashing after them with a terrific violence and noise, they passed a neat little cottage, from whence Sir Robert saw a man leap out, exhibiting the nimbleness of an animal, and rush with the speed of the wind almost in the same direction as themselves, every moment drawing nearer and nearer to the affrighted horses, until his hands rushed upon the harness and shoulder of the near horse. Another moment and he had leaped astride of him, and was gathering up the check reins of both, and with a strong arm gradually sawing upon the mouths of the horses until the subdued animals, breathless, and with smoking flanks, at last gave in to his control, and were drawn up safely at the side of the road.

There was probably no other possible manner in which they could have been stopped. No arm could have stayed their course by seizing the bit, and but very few persons could

have performed the feat that has already been described, of leaping upon the back of the near horse while under such headway.

Helping Clara to alight, Sir Robert turned towards him who had thus been the means of saving their lives.

He was a person of the middle size, dressed in the clothing of one engaged about a farm, and now stood with a hand on either of the horse's bits, muttering some incoherent words to himself. He did not seem to notice Sir Robert or Clara at all, nor indeed to think that he had performed any remarkable service, but appeared to be intent upon observing the horses, and muttering some unintelligible words to the animals that might have been one half of a reproof and one half of triumph, to judge from the man's tone of voice and his manner. To all of Sir Robert's reiterated thanks he turned a deaf ear; indeed he did not look towards Sir Robert at first for some minutes after he had spoken, but still addressed his singular mutterings to the horses themselves.

"What a singular being he is," remarked Sir Robert, turning to Clara, and asking her if she was harmed.

"I am only a little frightened, Sir Robert, but have received no bodily injury," she replied.

"Thank Heaven for that. Thrice we were on the very verge of the precipice above the river, and I had little expectation, even when that brave fellow leaped upon the horse, that we should bring up again in safety."

By this time a number of the villagers had come to the spot, and the driver, who had been partially hurt by his fall, also arrived. From these people Sir Robert received every kindness and assistance, and many of them recognized him, and remembered his service to one of their number, Edward Manley, when Sir Charles Marlow was about to wed Fanny Hardway. Edward Manley was there, and as he grasped Sir Robert's hand, he thanked Heaven that no harm had come to him. When Sir Robert sought the person who had rendered him such important service at such a critical moment, in order to remunerate him pecuniarily, which he did in a princely manner, he was told that he was Cato, Fanny's half-witted friend.

Sir Robert had thus dropped among a fresh army of friends, who would scarcely permit him to go away.

"Stay, if only for a few hours," urged Edward Manley.

"Come and let me arrange your dress and person," said the pretty matronly Fanny, who had hurried up to the spot in a neighboring wagon, hoping to be of some service.

"We will have a holiday, Sir Robert, if you will stop," said a leading man of the town.

Indeed half the village were urging them to share their hospitality, but Sir Robert put them off with some well conceived excuse, declaring that his horses were now too nearly tired out to become again unruly, and that his arrangements were such that he must reach a certain point that day.

"But on our return," said he, "we will hope to meet you all."

Again he sought the half-witted fellow who had been the means of saving their lives, and taking his hand, and thanking him sincerely, he commended him to the kindness of Edward Manley, whom he ordered to draw upon him for any means he might desire in taking care of the half-witted man.

With a cheer from the friendly crowd, they drove on in safety.

CHAPTER LVIII.

THE MISTAKE.

Weave we the woof. The thread is spun,
The web is wove, the work is done. GRAY.

POETS have ever found a fruitful theme for their muse in the soft, genial climate and lovely skies of Italy. Painters have immortalized nearly every spot upon the shores of the Rhine. Drawn thither by the two-fold purpose of improving the health of Clara, and also renewing his memory of the past, and of reviewing once more the scenes that were so intimately connected with his early career in life, Sir Robert entered earnestly into the study of the objects about them, when, after an easy journey of nearly two months, they stopped at the little inn of Mornentz.

It was not often that the landlord had an opportunity to serve guests who paid so liberally as Sir Robert, and the little inn became the scene of the utmost bustle and confusion. The bar maid was most assiduous to serve Clara, and the host was full of talk and profuse offers to Sir Robert.

"This is the Postilion, I believe?" asked Sir Robert, as he entered.

"Yes, sir, that is the name it has borne for half a century and more."

"A goodly name, and I remember it well, though it is many years since I was here." As Sir Robert spoke he mused upon the recollections of that period.

"I should have remembered the visit of one of your class," suggested the landlord, inquiringly.

"Perhaps not. I was on foot then, travelling merely for observation. But things have changed, for I can remember the tower that crowned yonder hill, but now it is gone."

"Ah! yes, that was at the time of the civil war. One of the factions tore it nearly to pieces."

Sir Robert was well aware of this fact, for thus had the castle of Ghertstein suffered, and many fine specimens of the old feudal times that had greeted his former visit, now lay in ruins, adding a heightened but sad interest to the scene. To Clara, all was so new, and so fraught with romantic interest, that for a while she had seemed to have forgotten her ill health and physical feebleness as they advanced, in the constant activity that she found for her mind in the scenes and associations about her. Sir Robert, in his large experience, explained everything, and told Clara too of his adventures here.

And now for the first time in the course of his explanations, Clara learned that the man who had so long kept her and Edith in London, was this same Robber of the Rhine, and when Sir Robert explained Karl Blasius's almost frantic passion for the Lady Gustine,

showing the cause of his singular passion for Edith by reason of her resemblance to her mother, then all was clear to Clara's mind as to the strange passion of Lancewood for herself as well as Edith, since by some freak of nature they both possessed eyes so much alike, besides other resemblances.

As they went on towards Bronts, a ruin was explored here, and a lofty tower there, reviving in Sir Robert's mind potent memories of years long since gone by. And finally they found themselves settled for a period in pleasant quarters in the city itself, and from whence they could visit the neighboring places of interest, and more particularly the ruins of the castle of Ghertstein.

It was a soft summer's afternoon when Clara and Sir Robert, after having mounted the heights of Ghertstein in the vehicle, alighted to wander over the moss covered stones, and beneath the ivy grown walls of the old feudal structure. A feeling almost akin to awe seemed to come over Sir Robert, and he half-whispered as he spoke to her who leaned upon his arm. Clara herself realized a feeling of strange interest as they paused now and then to recognize the divisions of the castle.

They had strolled thus among the ruins but a few moments, when they heard footsteps coming from a deep arch of the walls, and pausing, observed the form of one bent by care, age and sorrow, leaning upon a staff, while his gray beard and matted hair swept his breast.

"This must be the monk of whom they told us below," said Sir Robert, to Clara, who seemed inclined to turn and leave the spot.—"Surely, we have no cause for fear, Clara."

"No, Sir Robert, but I had rather go away. I had rather not meet him. What eyes he has! They make me shudder," she said, suiting the action to the word.

"Why, Clara, you are growing nervous lately," said her protector, pleasantly, endeavoring to reassure her.

Clara said no more, for already had the aged hermit, as such his appearance bespoke him, approached them too nearly for either party to pass by in that place without speaking.

Sir Robert approached and addressed the venerable appearing man, who started, and drawing nearer to him, looked deeply, as it were, into his face, and then turning to Clara, he bent a no less penetrating glance upon her. He appeared to be overcome with a strange emotion, and scarcely able to support his tottering frame, and yet he totally rejected the proffered arm of Sir Robert, and all the while seeming to be struggling for utterance.

"Sir Robert Brompton," he said, at last, "you have come to revive my early memory, and to review the scenes of years gone by."

"You know me then?"

"Ay, and know you not me?"

"I do not."

"It is strange."

"Your voice and eye haunt my memory, but I cannot recall anything to fix the name."

"Do you not remember the fortune-teller, the burglar, the pirate whom you met in the Spanish Indies? Remember you not Karl Blasius, the Robber of the Rhine?"

"Is it possible that you are Karl Blasius?" asked Sir Robert, in utter amazement, while Clara shrunk back and hid her face in her hands, as she recalled the person of him who stood before her!

"I stated to you in my letter, written at the time I left London, that this was my destination, and that here I should watch and pray."

"Your letter?"

"Ay, the one in which I explained the secret I had so long withheld," he replied.

"I received but one letter from you, and that was relating to the money I held for you in trust. That letter I answered, though I always wondered that I heard no more from you."

"Is it possible that the letter miscarried after all my precaution?" said the ex-robber, thoughtfully, and then suddenly, as if remembering himself, he continued:

"Then you know not even to this day that which I would have revealed?"

"You have never given me the promised information," replied Sir Robert, calmly.

"Your mistake has remained undiscovered then to the last?" continued the ex-robber.

"In relation to what?"

"Your child!"

"Edith is well and happy in the bosom of of her family."

"And you have ever until now believed that Edith was your daughter?"

"Gracious God! what do you mean?" exclaimed Sir Robert, in the utmost amazement.

"I mean that your child, flesh of your flesh, and blood of your blood, now stands by your side. Clara is your daughter!"

"Know you this, and can you prove it?" said Sir Robert, in a hoarse whisper.

"Upon my hope of salvation, what I have spoken is true."

"O, God, what a strange, life-long mistake is this. Clara, are you indeed my child?—Speak to me. But stay—the proof, the proof, I want, and must have that."

The excitement of the moment, the character of this startling revelation, the singular emotions induced from the first moment that Clara had realized who the singular being before them really was, all proved too much for her tender physical powers, and she fell fainting into Sir Robert's arms. He thought her for a moment to be really dead, that she had breathed her last, but following the direction of him who had just made so startling a revelation, Sir Robert bore her beneath the arch from whence they had first seen the repentant man emerge, and there he laid her down upon a rough couch in an old cell of the castle which Karl Blasius had long occupied. Here both adopted every means at hand to recover to life again the delicate form before them.—It was a fearful struggle of nature before she once more found power to breathe, and even after that, many serious moments were passed by Sir Robert in watching for a return of full consciousness.

At last, however, it came, and raising herself upon one arm, Clara looked about her as if to fathom the mystery of her situation, then suddenly she paused with her eyes resting upon the opposite wall, where the dainty light that came from the lofty window of the wall, played upon a picture of surpassing beauty.—She did not speak, but pointed Sir Robert to the spot where her eyes rested.

"It is the long-lost picture!" he exclaimed, gazing with the deepest interest.

"Ay, it is *her* picture," said Karl Blasius; "my only, my constant companion. Look upon that face," he continued, "and then upon the picture, and you will hardly need the further evidence of the truth of what I have told you, but which I shall presently give you."

Sir Robert did gaze first at Clara, and then at the almost perfect picture of her who had been his dearly loved wife, and conviction was written upon every line of his face. He sat down upon the side of the couch, and taking one of Clara's hands within his own, he covered his face with the other, and breathed like one whose emotions defied the power of ordinary utterance.

In that exciting moment the facts flashed across his mind like a meteor, and he reviewed minutely the position that Clara had held in his household and his heart, from the moment when he discovered her standing amazed and wondering at the rich drawing-room into which Edith had conducted her, until the present hour. He recalled her as the poor outcast who had befriended and cherished his adopted child; he saw her, young and beautiful, struggling with her delicacy of feeling, while she shared his protection and bounty—a protection that was hers by right. He reviewed all these things in the light which he would be supposed to do now that he knew all, for he believed the robber's words, and the evidence of that strangely faithful picture of his wife.

He pressed the feeble hand that rested within his own, and Clara raised his silently to her lips! No words could truthfully describe that moment, no language honestly depict the workings of those two hearts. Sir Robert felt as though he hardly dared to speak and break the spell that rested upon them, and Clara only pressed his hand silently to her lips. She remembered that he had been indeed a father to her from the first, and could have been no kinder even with this present knowledge, save in the sympathy of blood. He had, as we have before shown, explained to Clara, when he thought Edith to be his child, and during the fearful aberration of mind that followed the disclosure to her, the emotions that had led him to adopt the plan which was suggested to him by Mr. Howard, his agent, so many years now past, and thus Clara saw her father in no unnatural light at the present moment, for the secret of his life was known to her.

"Ah, Clara, Clara, how shall I speak to you—what can I say?" whispered Sir Robert, leaning over her.

"Only that you love me as well as before

this change came over us," she answered, in a gentle voice.

"You need no assurance of that, my dear child; but I must seek for an explanation at once from this man, as soon as you are well enough to return to the town."

"Can it be?" asked Clara, after gazing for a few moments in silence upon the picture, "can it be that that beautiful being was my mother—so fair, so noble, so angelic?"

Sir Robert's heart was too full for speech; he gazed in silence, only turning now and then from the picture to Clara, that he might mark the wonderful resemblance which existed between them, and then regarding once more almost with awe the life-like representation that the artist had left of the original.

Clara could not suppress an involuntary shudder, when Karl Blasius offered her some wine; there was so much of alarm and dread associated with the memory she had in her own experience of him, and so much more in the extended knowledge of his life gained from Sir Robert, that she could not bear to look into his face. Karl saw this, and only sighed—he read her feelings exactly. But Sir Robert pressed the wine upon her, and she drank of it, that she might be able to follow him to their residence in town.

Having partially recovered, he led her to their vehicle, and driving back to Bronts, he left her, promising to return again as soon as he should have revisited the ruin, and obtained the explanation that was of so much interest to both him and Clara.

With this purpose, Sir Robert once more sought Karl Blasius. The robber was expecting him, and as he entered his humble abode, he first addressed him, saying he knew the queries he would make, and then drawing a rough seat near to where Sir Robert had placed himself, he explained the mystery.

It required but few words between them to show Sir Robert that nearly all had turned upon the fact of the strong resemblance each bore the other, and the singular likeness that both presented to his departed wife. Karl Blasius, who had long since fathomed and ferreted out the whole affair—from motives that the reader can easily comprehend—then showed Sir Robert that he had at the outset been on the right track, and that he had actually discovered the woman to whom his agent had consigned the care of his child; but when he attempted to follow out the thread of direction that this woman gave him, instead of its bringing him in contact with Clara, the true child, he met and thought he recognized Edith, and from that hour and moment, his grand mistake was commenced.

The woman had been visited in disguise by Sir Robert, and had not the least knowledge of who he or the child might be, but considered that his endeavor to recover her might be the result of his aroused conscience, and therefore received his liberal remuneration and told him all she knew. Indeed she told him, truly too, that the house in which she lived, humble as it was, had been robbed, on the supposition that she had gold secreted there, and she was herself wounded, and left for dead, while the child was taken care of by some chance hand, until she happened to discover it again—but she was too poor to take it home, and support it, without any prospect of remuneration.

Of course Sir Robert had never called again on this woman, because he had no desire to expose himself in relation to the matter, and having fully repaid her services, and at a price that astonished her, as coming from one apparently so humble, he never again sought her presence.

"When I by chance met with Clara," continued the robber, "her singular resemblance to the Lady Gustine challenged my interest, and I inquired out her history, but it was unsatisfactory. I could hear little or nothing. Chance, as you will remember, led me to find where Edith was, and I bore her away from your house, and placing the two together, I was confounded. I knew that one or both must be the child of Lady Gustine. I was sure of that; for though I learned that the one you had ever supposed to be hers had been shipped to India, yet I felt sure some secret lay at the bottom of it all, and I determined to fathom it; but it was not until after they had both escaped from me that I succeeded in establishing beyond a doubt which was Lady Gustine's child. When you visited me as the fortune-teller, I had found this out, and also had possession of a small memorandum in the hand-writing of your agent, a small book in which he had

kept his account with the woman in charge of the child, and in which also was his name and reference to a package of papers relating to the same business. This book he had one day dropped at her house; indeed I believe it was the very last time he was there. The woman could not read, and when I offered her pay for any information she could give me, she said she had this book, which I might have if I liked, and thus I became possessed of it, and of your secret.

"This book also contained in pencil the copy of two letters, which he had evidently sent to you while you were in India, relating to your purpose and plan as it regarded your child. Of course, possessing these papers, I felt that I could, should the time arrive when I should require your aid, command it. And it was also that little book which enabled me to speak as I did to you when you came to consult me as Madame Duval. I promised, for the service you rendered me in relation to the Hardhead trial, to give you valuable information that nearly concerned you and yours. This was the explanation I had intended to make to you, and which I did put in writing, and presumed that you would get, but my very caution defeated itself."

"What a strange story is all this," said Sir Robert, musing.

"Are you satisfied with the explanation which I give?" asked the repentant robber.

"Yes."

"And yet perhaps in so delicate a matter it were better to make assurance doubly sure. The book I retained with my other papers and valuables that I brought here with me, partly from an idea that it might perhaps some day serve some purpose that I could not then foresee, and partly because I did not wish after all to send it to you at the risk of its being lost, and perhaps making the whole affair public, and injure your position. Since I have had it here I chanced one day to examine it more minutely than I had done before, and found this item, which I will show you."

Saying which, he produced a well-worn and somewhat decayed memorandum book, from which he read to Sir Robert as follows:

"Perhaps it is needless, but I have thought best in case of accident to myself, or of the occurrence of any unforeseen casualty, to have the identity of the child placed beyond the possibility of mistake. I have, therefore, examined the child and find on the back of its head, beneath the line of the ears, a bare place of the size of a sovereign, produced by some severe wound."

"It was incurred when she was a little more than a year old, I remember well, by a fall."

"Of course, I have no means of knowing whether the scar is still there or not, but you can easily satisfy yourself by examining when you return to Bronts," said Karl Blasius.

"You will give me the book, will you not?" asked Sir Robert.

"Certainly."

"Then I have all necessary evidence to satisfy myself in the matter," he replied.

After a few more words relating to the strange fortune which had led them so often to cross each other's path in life, since their first meeting at the little inn of Mornentz, Sir Robert bade the so called monk of Ghertstein farewell, and sought once more the presence of his child.

He found that the exciting scene through which she had just passed, was far too much for her delicate state of health, and the change that had come over her features, frightened him. She noted well the expression of his face—her own was calm and collected. She had been at prayer before Sir Robert came in, and had now risen and lay upon her couch, with a quick heaving of the breast from the exertion, but with an expression that bespoke all within to be peaceable and happy.

Sir Robert told her all that had passed at the ruin. On examination, he found the scar upon the back of her head. There could be no further doubt; he was perfectly satisfied.

"But, Clara, you look more feeble than I have seen you for many days," he said.

"I have long felt that I was slowly approaching my end. Perhaps now that I have been made so happy, I have scarcely a wish remaining ungratified."

"Dear, dear Clara."

"And yet there is one thing I would pray you to satisfy me in."

"Anything, Clara, anything in this world, that I can do, even to the sacrifice of my life."

"Edith thinks that she is your child—she is satisfied of that."

"Yes, we have all been deceived."

"Then promise me never to undeceive her. It would make her wretched. I shall die more in peace to know that she will live in the happy delusion."

"But—"

"Nay, if you love me, *father!*"

"Ah! Clara that word!" and Sir Robert bent over and kissed the pallid cheek before him!

"You promise me that she shall not be undeceived?"

"I promise!" said Sir Robert.

"One more request," she continued.

"What is it, Clara?" Sir Robert pressed her hand and leaned over her to hear it.

"Bury me by my *mother's* side—will you not?"

"I will, I will," sobbed Sir Robert, weeping like a child.

He watched with her all that night. At times she conversed almost like one inspired with divine grace. She said she was more happy than ever before in her life, and so she evidently was. Her only wish now was to join her dear mother in heaven. As the morning light struggled across the mountain top, and lighted up the broad valley of the Rhine, she kissed her father's cheek, and murmured in a low, sweet voice:

"I go, dear father, to meet *her*, my mother, among the blest."

> "Hark! they whisper, angels say,
> Sister spirit, come away!"

* * * * *

Edith never knew of these strange revelations, but lived happy in her unconscious mistake. The robber soon slept his final sleep among the ruins, while our other characters wended their way peaceably and happy, one by one, and in due season to their final home.

Sir Robert lived on, a more thoughtful man. He withdrew almost entirely from the world, only striving to do as much good with his princely means as was possible. He cherished his adopted child, Edith, and in his heart, the memory of the two who were gone before him to the spirit land. He brought Clara's remains and laid them, as he had promised, beside her mother's ashes, and here, when unobserved by the busy eyes of the world, he often resorted to weep and pray. In his will, he endowed Edith's children largely, and he was buried as he desired, by Clara's side.

And thus was consummated THE MISTAKE OF A LIFE-TIME.

THE END.

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